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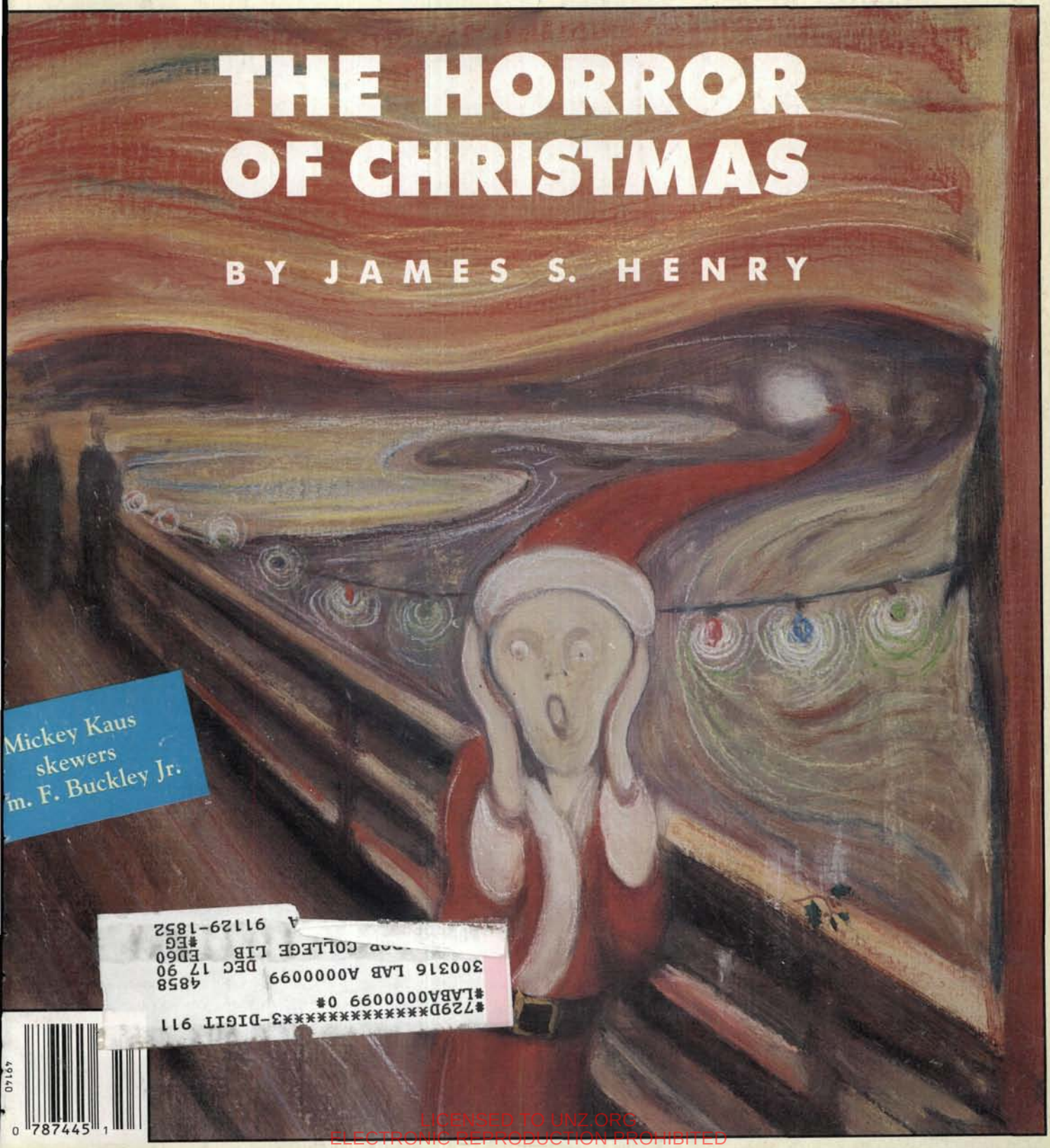

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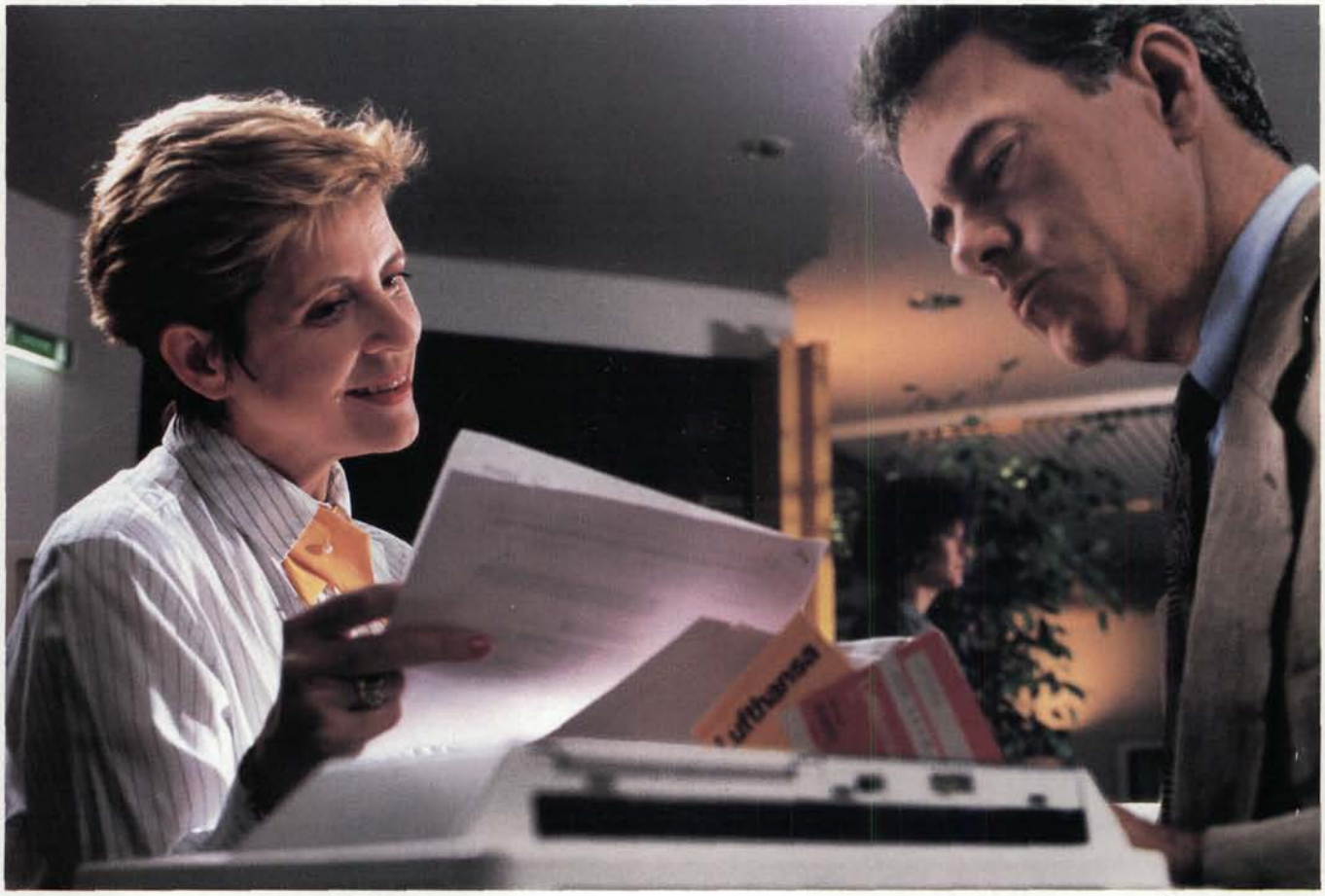

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FROM WASHINGTON

The War Powers war

Is it clear beyond dispute that President Bush cannot launch a war against Iraq without the prior consent of Congress? Last week this column said so, but that, tragically, does not make it so. The administration, while promising "consultation," maintains that it has all the legal authority it needs to make good on its threats of war if necessary. Conservative legal scholars are beavering away on theories to explain why the words, "Congress shall have power . . . to declare war" don't mean what they say.

We have reached the reductio ad absurdum of the conservative campaign of recent years to give the president dictatorial powers in making foreign policy. The last decade has seen a rich variety of foreign adventures: among them Grenada, Panama, the funding of the Nicaraguan contras, the Libya bombing, the sale of arms to the Ayatollah, the reflagging of the Kuwaiti tankers. (Remember that one? The idea was to help Kuwait's ally Iraq in the war against Iran. "It's a funny old world," as Margaret Thatcher said the other day.) Each one came with a theory—often produced after the fact—about how Congress would be exceeding its constitutional mandate if it chose to interfere. "Micromanage" was the general accusation.

But "micromanagement" is not the issue now. If the president can send half a million troops halfway around the world and make a deliberate, leisurely, unilateral decision to start a massive land war, then the constitutional provision about Congress declaring war has become meaningless.

Let us pause only briefly to relish the irony of those who usually campaign under the banners of "strict construction" and "original intent" fleeing on this occasion from the plain meaning of words. First they snip away at the "declare war" clause until there is nothing left. Then, with a gusto that would make any liberal activist proud, they build fantasy castles on the clause making the president "commander in chief" of the armed forces. A commander is an operational leader. The commander of a battalion cannot decide alone to commit his soldiers to war. The words "commander in chief," given their commonsense meaning, don't confer that authority either—especially when the authority is explicitly conferred on others.

The busy beavers have three counterarguments. One is that the authors of the Constitution considered and explicitly rejected language giving Congress the power to "make war," rather than merely "declare war." The standard reply is that this change was intended to leave the president, in James Madison's words, "the power to repel sudden attacks." The original intent game is usually a war of quotes. But the other side has no return fire for this one. It is about as clear as anything can be in constitutional interpretation that the Framers did not intend to give the president carte blanche to start a war.

And so the second counterargument: forget the Framers. In real life, over two centuries, the president has taken on the war power. A favorite statistic is that the United States has sent forces abroad some 200 times, while there have been only five declarations of war. What's one more time?

One simple answer to this is that 196 wrongs don't make a right. But this "200 wars" statistic is one of those supposed facts that take on a life of their own in ideological struggles. In their book on the war power, *To Chain the Dog of War* (University of Illinois Press), Francis Wormuth and Edwin Firmage have an amusing chapter on what they call "Lists of Wars." The lists melt away when you start eliminating minor episodes with little or no actual fighting; rogue actions by distant officers authorized by neither the president nor Congress; actions Congress did approve, though not by a formal declaration, and so on. Although presidents have waged war unconstitutionally on occasion, the authors conclude, no president has ever attempted to justify his action by a bald assertion of unilateral authority. At least not yet.

No question the trend since World War II has been toward ever broader assertions of presidential war-making power. And Congress has not always resisted. But a trend is not a mandate. Reversing the postwar trend away from strict construction of the Constitution is just what conservatives aspire to in areas like individual rights and criminal procedure. Why should war powers be exempt?

A third counterargument against taking the "declare war" clause seriously is that Congress can stop a war anytime it wants through its control over government spending. But the Constitution gives Congress the spending power *and* the power to declare war. The one doesn't make the other meaningless. Furthermore, when Congress passed the Boland Amendment—using its "power of the purse" in an effort to stop American support for the Nicaraguan contras—these same conservative theorists declared that this was an unconstitutional abuse of the spending power to interfere with the president's foreign policy authority. And when the Reagan administration raised money for the contras abroad, this was declared to be beyond Congress's power to prevent. Operation Desert Shield is also being financed, supposedly, by foreign contributions. If Congress tried to cut off spending for a war against Iraq, our theorist friends would surely argue that Congress cannot foreclose the spending of other people's money.

Forty-five Democratic members of Congress have asked the Federal District Court in Washington to stop President Bush from going to war against Iraq without congressional consent. It would certainly be a first if Judge Harold Greene granted the injunction. But if he declines, that doesn't mean the constitutional question is answered. The Justice Department brief for Bush doesn't even contend that the president has absolute war-making power. Instead, it emphasizes that this is a "political question" that courts shouldn't deal with.

As judicial conservatives usually love to point out, the Constitution does not explicitly give judges the right to interpret it. Procedurally, judges usually get the last word; and Justice John Marshall, in *Marbury* v. *Madison*, reasoned that when faced with a conflict between a law or government action and the Constitution as they understood it, judges must enforce the Constitution. That's where judicial review came from. In rare cases judicial review is impossible, and this may be one of them. There are good practical reasons why courts should not try to settle disputes between the other two branches. But the president cannot ignore the Constitution just because no court will force him to obey it.

While the president tries to convince Saddam Hussein that war is imminent, his lawyers try to persuade the judge that it's not. "The action plaintiffs fear, the unleashing of an offensive military attack, is entirely hypothetical at this point." Wonderful. Let's keep it that way. But if the president gets to feeling less hypothetical, he must go to Congress first. After all, he keeps saying that we're fighting for the rule of law.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Violence doesn't pay

To the editors:

You disdain the blockade and demand an immediate attack on Iraq ("Tough Duty," December 10), ignoring the possibility that it could lead to the destruction of the Tel Aviv-Haifa Israeli heartland, the loss of Middle Eastern oil supplies, and an Islamic jihad aimed at all Americans between the Atlantic and Indian oceans. In any event, those of us who have seen some combat (and have read some history) should remind you of what happened the last time that America, when faced with such a choice, opted for the more violent solution.

The time was mid-1944. A handful of American submariners had gained a stranglehold over Japan's supply lines by sinking most of its merchant fleet and denying it access to oil and the other sinews of war. At that point any rational decision-maker would simply have tightened the vise and waited for the isolated island nation to come to terms. Instead, America's bloody-minded generals and supine political leaders adopted a frontal-assault strategy. As a result, they needlessly caused the deaths of 53,000 Americans and more than 2 million Japanese in the bloody final year of the war. Yet only three years later America began a desperate attempt to rebuild Japan as a bulwark against a newfound threat.

WILLIAM M. BURKE
San Francisco, California

Out of Africa

To the editors:

As a black graduate student working on Egyptian archaeology, I support the study of the history and prehistory of Africa as well as Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The scholarship described in Andrew Sullivan's "Racism 101" (November 26), however, is not the best way to go about it. Not only is intolerance and separatism apparent, but as Mr. Sullivan states, the scholarship is just plain bad. Much of the "research" is done with translations of literature, not the originals. If you want to compare Egyptian literature with Greek literature, you need to learn Egyptian hieratic/hieroglyphs and Greek. Anything less is open to criticism.

Asa Hilliard, the Afrocentrism conference organizer, and others have been known to identify ancient Egyptians and Mesoamericans as "black" due to nostril size and high cheekbones. This type of "scholarship" was undertaken 100 to 150 years ago by white racists and is justifiably identified as bad research.

The term "black" is a recent cultural construct that cannot be transported through time and space with meaning. Yes, Egypt is in Africa and is therefore "African." And Egypt shows many similarities to its surrounding cultures in Africa and the Mediterranean. There is, however, a problem with identifying the Egyptians racially. Like modern Egypt, ancient Egypt had people of varying shades and bone structures. In my opinion, the ancient Egyptians were not "white," meaning European. Beyond that, it gets difficult. The Egyptians distinguished themselves from people further south in Nubia by portraying the Nubians as darker than Egyptians. The hair on mummies ranges from straight to curly. I believe it is more important to examine how the Egyptians culturally defined themselves, not how we want to categorize them.

It is important to stress the diversity of the African continent. It is even more important to address the spirit and strengths of Africans here in the Americas, North and South. The way to address the Eurocentrism of current history is not by substituting another ism. The study of history needs to be inclusive and multicultural, not exclusive and blatantly unicultural. It is important for black kids, all kids, to have a past. It should, however, be based on better scholarship.

ROBIN L. SEWELL
Oakland, California

Ad nauseam

To the editors:

I was disappointed in Sidney Blumenthal's dismissal of Jesse Helms's victory as merely a nuisance to the State Department ("Entr'acte," November 26).

If the Republicans decide in 1992 to win at any cost, they have a potent message. For example, up here in northern Wisconsin an ad in which a white hand reaches into an empty creel as the voice-over intones, "Too bad. You went to your favorite lake only to find it fished out because the Indians were allowed their outdated fishing rights," would strike terror even in as powerful a congressman as David Obey.

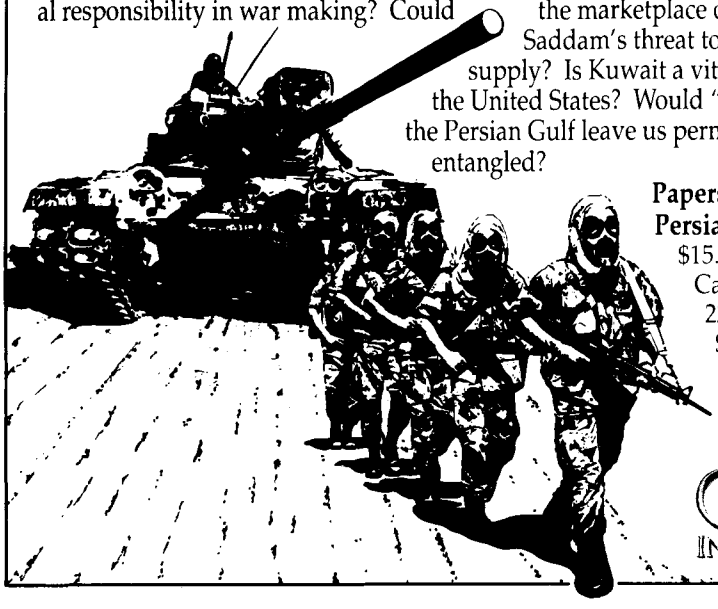
I suspect variations of the ad might work in many places as the economy turns sour, and whites grow ever angrier and more frustrated. Scapegoats will be needed, and men like Jesse Helms will be eager to provide them.

LILLIAN SPANGENBERG
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

continued on page 42

Is America rushing to war?

Four hundred thousand American troops have been ordered to the Persian Gulf—the largest deployment outside the United States since the Vietnam War. In a series of papers the Cato Institute considers the questions that must be answered before offensive action is taken: What is Congress's constitutional responsibility in war making? Could the marketplace cope with Saddam's threat to our oil supply? Is Kuwait a vital interest of the United States? Would "victory" in the Persian Gulf leave us permanently entangled?



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 31, 1990

HOUSE OF ILL-REPUTE

What the long-serving senator from Hawaii, Daniel K. Inouye, told the Ethics Committee last week is true. The Keating Five hearings are not just an investigation of the actions of a few colleagues. They are a trial of the entire U.S. Congress, and the way it does business. Of course, Mr. Inouye meant that since everyone is guilty, none are guilty, especially his friend Dennis DeConcini of Arizona. In fact, Mr. DeConcini is guilty of many things that others are not. But the evidence that has emerged does support a broader indictment than the committee has yet considered.

The picture of the institution that has emerged, as those who have been watching the proceedings on C-SPAN will attest, is an extremely unattractive one. It shows legislators crowded around the Capitol's hidden back door, where they go to trade votes and favors for money. In lurid detail, it portrays the contorted poses they assume to please their beneficiaries. And it reveals hypocrisy so deeply embedded that many of the kept men themselves seem actually to believe that the gratuities they habitually accept—in the form of campaign contributions, meals, trips, and honoraria—have no effect on their actions. The boys no longer seem to feel any sense of shame.

Senator Alan Cranston of California presents the phenomenon of senatorial streetwalking at its most brazen. His office, testimony has indicated, functioned as a kind of political vending machine. With no apparent regard for rules or appearances, Joy Jacobson, Mr. Cranston's chief fund-raiser, worked out of his Senate office and attended meetings about legislative issues. Ms. Jacobson gave the senator lists of high-rolling contributors with detailed instructions on how each was to be stroked and squeezed. The sums demanded climbed ever upward. When Ms. Jacobson wanted to ask Charles Keating for $250,000, Mr. Cranston insisted on asking for half a million. In one memo Ms. Jacobson reminds the senator that many of those who have paid out have "cases or legislative matters pending with our office," and "rightfully expect some kind of resolution." In another she forwards Mr. Keating's instructions for leaning on thrift regulators who were closing in around him. Mr. Cranston continued to run errands for Mr. Keating two years after regulators told him they were recommending Mr. Keating be prosecuted, and after Bruce Babbitt told him Mr. Keating was a crook.

Mr. Cranston differs from his co-defendants in the flagrancy of his money-grubbing. He demanded more cash, demanded it more often, and didn't bother to keep talk of dollars and favors separate. But the others were only slightly more subtle. Beginning in 1984 Dennis DeConcini of Arizona did everything Mr. Keating asked. The senator demanded that Ed Gray, Mr. Keating's nemesis, be fired as head of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, the regulatory body that oversaw thrifts before the great collapse. Mr. DeConcini wrote to the White House to press the appointment of Lee Henkel, a Keating stooge, to a seat on the board. It was Mr. DeConcini who demanded that no aides be present at the two infamous April 1987 meetings with the five senators. This made it possible for him later to deny what Mr. Gray remembers of the meeting: that Mr. DeConcini offered him a deal to get the regulators off Mr. Keating's back. Like his colleague Mr. Cranston, Mr. DeConcini was still batting for Mr. Keating two years after learning he was crooked.

The remaining three are perhaps less culpable than Mr. DeConcini and Mr. Cranston but are far from innocent in the affair. Don Riegle of Michigan is still suffering from acute amnesia. He forgot that he met with Mr. Keating, forgot that Mr. Keating gave him money, and forgot that he helped set up the first of the April meetings. His datebook notes a meeting with Mr. Keating after the warnings from regulators, but Mr. Riegle can't remember whether it ever took place. Mr. Keating held a fund-raiser for Mr. Riegle in 1987, and was offering to hold another in 1988 when *The Detroit News* broke the story of their earlier meetings; only then did the senator call off the show and return past contributions. There is reason to believe that

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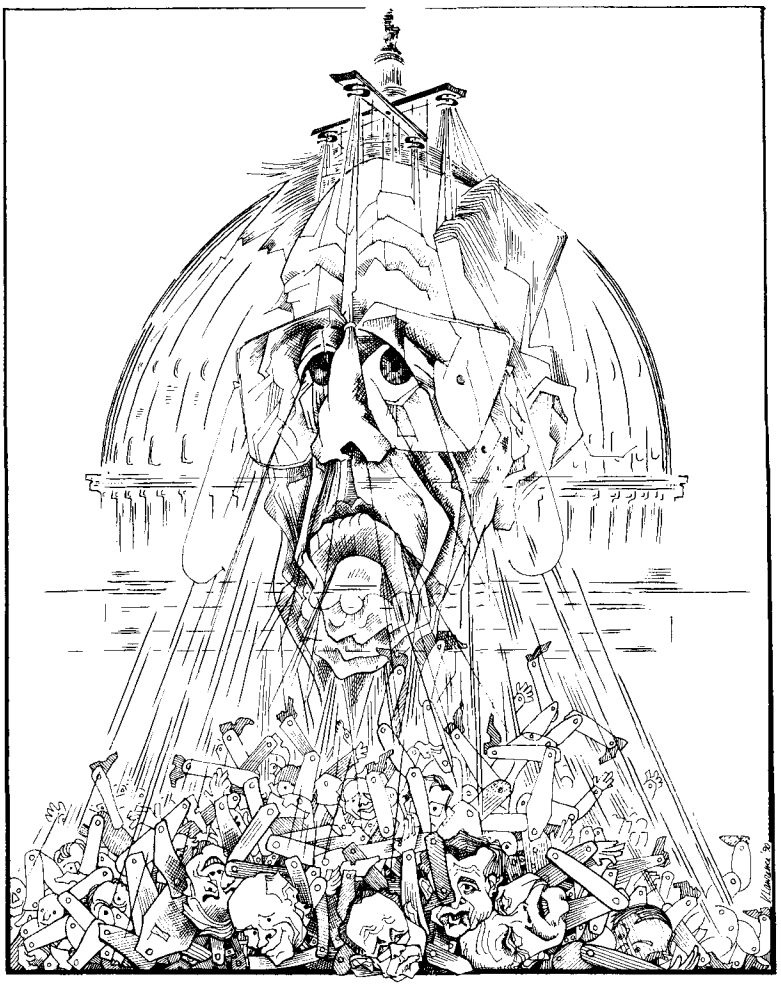
Mr. Riegle knew that what he was doing was improper from the start, and took pains to cover his tracks.

John Glenn's claim to have been lost in space is more plausible. His actions seem truly confused. At times the former astronaut ignored Mr. Keating's demands. But Mr. Glenn attended both April meetings, and was belligerent on Mr. Keating's behalf. After the regulators said they were referring Mr. Keating to the Justice Department for prosecution, Mr. Glenn turned down Mr. Keating's fund-raising help. But a year later he agreed to have lunch with Mr. Keating and House Speaker Jim Wright. It is possible that Mr. Glenn, in his familiar fog, forgot who Mr. Keating was.

The only Republican of the bunch, John McCain of Arizona, wins credit for finally drawing the line. After the second of the two April meetings he told both Mr. DeConcini and Mr. Keating that he wouldn't lean on the regulators anymore. Mr. Keating called him a "wimp." But before the rupture, Mr. McCain and his family were regular guests of Mr. Keating's on trips to the Bahamas. Mr. McCain reimbursed the owner of Lincoln Savings and Loan for only a small fraction of the cost of these holidays. Yet he never reported the vacations on Senate disclosure forms, or on his income taxes. He says he thought his wife had paid Mr. Keating back. This is hard to believe.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

If these five careers come to an end, it won't be much of a loss to the Senate or the country. Mr. Cranston and Mr. DeConcini in particular should resign, or be removed. But if the scandal ends with the sacrifice of a few scapegoats and nothing more, the episode will amount to little more than a wasted opportunity. Of course, the five should be punished. Senate rules as well as federal law prohibit trading favors or votes for campaign contributions. There is ample evidence that the five did exactly that. The rules also require senators to avoid the appearance of this sort of quid pro quo. The five created the appearance of impropriety because they acted improperly. Mr. Cranston makes the same defense as Mr. Inouye: everyone does it. This is about as convincing as the speeder who says he was only going as fast as the traffic. In fact, Mr. Cranston was driving a lot faster. But even if others were speeding, it's no excuse. The five senators knew what they were doing. They just didn't take very seriously the possibility of getting caught.

The problems with enforcing the rules against the five is that it makes it look like the problem was a few bad actors. In fact, the problem is just as much with the rules themselves. The Senate needs a code of conduct that clearly distinguishes acceptable constituent case work, like inquiring into a late Social Security check, from improper interference, like strong-arming regulators or prosecutors. An attempt to articulate a set of principles was published in these pages earlier this year (see "Quid Pro Whoa" by Michael Waldman, TNR, March 19). The same limits on "constituent service" should apply whether the constituent is a big contributor or not. The Senate also needs to pass a ban on unearned honoraria, which the House finally did last year. Both bodies need to prohibit lobbyist-provided trips, gifts, and meals for members, their families, and their staffs. Most important, however, the House and Senate need to pass a comprehensive campaign finance reform bill. Only this will wean Congress from its addiction to ever larger sums of private money and liberate it from the increasingly time-consuming task of begging funds. The solution, in a word, is public financing. Only when legislators no longer need to raise thousands of dollars a day will they be freed from the taint of corruption. Complete public financing of congressional campaigns would cost $300 million a year, or about what we pay for the S&L bailout every two days.

New rules are a pressing necessity if honor and public confidence are to be restored to the legislative branch. But even the most meticulously drawn blueprint for reform will fail if the ethos of Capitol Hill

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remains the same. The idea of a Charles Keating trying to buy votes and influence from U.S. senators should shock the Ethics Committee, if no one else. Instead its members wring their hands about the low esteem in which the public holds the legislative branch, and seem sorry they let televised hearings take place. Public trust will return when a sense of shame revisits the Capitol. Until a consciousness takes hold that there are values more important than re-election, nothing will change.

Voters have to reconsider their role as well. Ordinary citizens have unhesitantly endorsed the notion that "constituent service" is never wrong. Congressional campaigns are increasingly fought on the issue of how many federal dollars Representative Jones has "brought home" to the district, whether in the form of redundant military bases kept open or tax breaks for local industry. Serving a local constituency in this way usually means disserving a national one. We need to choose officials who are capable of saying no to us. This means restoring an idea of representative government that regards lawmakers as advocates for the public interest, rather than stand-ins for those to whom they are indebted. Hopelessly high-minded? No more than the present setup is hopelessly corrupt.

NOTEBOOK

AMERICAN PSYCHE: Congratulations to Brett Easton Ellis and his agent. It's been a real American comedy, the alleged persecution of *American Psycho* by Simon and Schuster and its alleged redemption by Vintage Books, a division of Random House. As if Mr. Ellis's civil liberties were in any way threatened by a publisher dumping his book. (Are the civil liberties of directors violated when Orion picks up a movie Fox decided not to release?) Judging by about a third of the galleys, *American Psycho* is repellent, misogynist rubbish. The horrifying thing, though, is not that it's the product of a writer's sick mind, but that it's the product of a writer's career decision. The book's commercial failure, however, has only one thing standing in its way. The National Organization of Women has called for a boycott of Mr. Ellis's book and of all books published by Random House. It has set up a phone number that plays a tape of the novel's sickest descriptions of the torture of women. The feminists are playing right into the hands of the misogynists and Ellis's agent: the phone number is sure to fall into the wrong lonely hands and the boycott is sure to turn Ellis into a First Amendment hero. Meanwhile, the Iranian government reiterates its death sentence against Salman Rushdie. We'll take the struggle between the magical realist and the mullahs over the struggle between the creep and the gender police any day.

PRECEDENTIAL CHRISTMAS: Elves are at work in the White House Historical Association. Every year the association produces a commemorative Christmas ornament that it sells at its little store a block from the White House. This year the ornament features President Martin Van Buren. Van Buren was the last vice president to succeed by election the president he served. More important, as the association's brochure that accompanies the ornament makes abundantly clear, he was denied re-election four years later because of circumstances traceable to his predecessor. "Van Buren's administration, which began with high prospects, was struck immediately with a national depression," the brochure explains. "Brought on by the free-wheeling banking practices of private banks, and the loss of regulation by the Bank of the United States, which Andrew Jackson had destroyed, the Panic of 1837 was not to subside significantly for five years. The struggle over this desperate situation dominated Van Buren's presidency as restless, angry citizens vented their frustrations at the President, the closest point of human contact with the government." Goodness. Do we detect a suggestion that Ronald Reagan put the coal in George Bush's stocking?

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR NEWS: Congratulations to C. Vann Woodward on his induction to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Professor Woodward fills the seat vacated by the death of Leonard Bernstein. ●

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

TOPIC OF CANCER

By Robert Bazell

In recent years more and more women with breast cancer have been suing their medical insurance companies to force them to pay six-figure sums for a procedure called an autologous bone marrow transplant (ABMT). In the typical case, one or more doctors testify that though the procedure may not work, it stands as the only hope for the woman to survive longer than a few more years. On the other side, doctors paid by the insurers say there is no proof that the treatment will do the woman any good, and that it may kill her faster than the cancer. The woman believes she will die without the treatment, and almost never will she encounter a judge who will rule that she can't have it. This scenario has become so common that many of the

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mostly young, enthusiastic doctors who perform the transplants spend a day or more every week in court trying to force insurance companies to pay for their prospective patients.

Because Blue Cross and Blue Shield were losing so many court cases, they recently offered to finance clinical trials to determine whether ABMTs work. But many of the doctors who carry out the procedure say it is too late, because no patients will volunteer for the control group. The confrontation over ABMTs illustrates how the militancy and impatience with the medical establishment that has characterized people with AIDS is spreading to people with other diseases. The cancer patients, who are mostly young, have no interest in scientific proof or clinical trials that likely will end long after their deaths. They demand the treatment that they believe will give them the best shot. Although that view is understandable, the battle is increasing the cost and irrationality of medical care.

ABMTs began when surgeons who had been transplanting bone marrow from one individual to another as a treatment for leukemia turned their attention to other cancers. The doctors started with breast cancer patients whose malignancy had either spread greatly beyond the original tumor or metastasized to other parts of the body. The prognosis for such women usually is grim. The goal of ABMT is to increase massively the dose of cancer-killing drugs that a patient receives. (Without ABMT, the intensity of chemotherapy is limited because at extremely high doses most anti-cancer drugs will destroy the bone marrow and kill the patient.) In an ABMT the surgeon first removes some of the patient's bone marrow and freezes it. The patient gets the high dose of chemotherapy, and then receives her own marrow back again. An ABMT patient must spend weeks in an isolation room. During the time she has no bone marrow, she lacks a complete immune system and is highly susceptible to infections. The treatment costs anywhere from $100,000 to $300,000.

Depending on whose data you believe, between 5 percent and 20 percent of the women undergoing ABMT die from the procedure itself. But the surgeons carrying out ABMT say it works—sometimes. They claim they are seeing some women survive who would have died had they received only conventional chemotherapy. The surgeons and others have repeated those claims on TV talk shows, in magazines, and in newspapers. It's difficult to know for sure how many patients are better off for having undergone ABMT. The doctors performing ABMTs have published few articles in medical journals. Because ABMTs are relatively new, no patient yet has survived five years without recurrence—the time generally accepted as a cancer cure.

Dr. Thomas Spitzer, who performs ABMTs at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, concedes that only "a minuscule percentage" of the hundreds of women who have gotten ABMTs have benefited from them. But he says that is the result of the trial and error that must inevitably accompany any new procedure. He says he is now able to pick the patients most likely to be helped, and in that group, one-third will live more than a year or so after treatment. But Spitzer concedes he cannot prove that. Still, he argues that insurers should pay. "If it were clearly established that this treatment had a 2 percent chance of curing the patient, and she had no chance without it," asks Spitzer, "would that be worth it? To the patient, it certainly would be. To the doctor, it's hard not to offer a treatment that is potentially curative. Is it worth it to society? I hope so."

But other physicians say that Spitzer and his colleagues cannot even prove that ABMT benefits 2 percent of the patients. Dr. Craig Henderson of the Harvard Medical School heads the Breast Evaluation Center at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. He argues that the doctors carrying out ABMTs are bone marrow transplanters, not cancer specialists, and they "think they are performing miracles." And, he says, doctors with experience treating breast cancer know that a certain percentage of the patients with even the most seemingly hopeless forms of the disease will survive for many years with conventional therapy or even with no treatment. "So when one or a few women do well, that doesn't prove that it is related to the specific therapy that was given."

To illustrate the dangers of medicine lacking underpinnings of scientific proof, Henderson points to the Halsted radical mastectomy. In that operation surgeons removed not only the breast but a large part of the chest muscle and all of the lymph nodes. Surgeons routinely carried out the Halsted operation from early in the century until the late 1960s, when some discovered that excising only the breast or even only the lump could be just as effective. "Because the preliminary data were promising," Henderson says, "approximately 5 million women got a relatively mutilating form of surgery before we found out that it wasn't much better than the conventional form of treatment." Similarly, he says, "We simply do not have evidence that ABMT is much better than standard treatment." In fact it may be shortening the lives of women who would have lived if they had not undergone the transplant.

Most medical insurers deny payment for treatments deemed experimental. The meaning of "experimental" has been fought in the courts for years. Until now, many of the arguments focused on various organ transplants that could benefit a relatively small number of patients. ABMTs drastically elevated the insurers' level of fear. The marrow transplanters are already trying it for many other forms of cancer. Thousands of people could be clamoring for a procedure that could well bankrupt the medical insurance business long before there is proof of its effectiveness. "We can't be out spending companies' money and insurance money for

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any doctor who comes along and says I have a wonderful new cure for this kind of cancer or that kind of cancer," says Dr. Marvin Shapiro, an insurance consultant and the former head of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Why are ABMTs so expensive? Part of the answer is that when any procedure falls under the heading of "experimental" and escapes the scrutiny of third-party payers, hospitals, doctors, and drug companies can charge whatever they want. The ABMTs have certainly proved lucrative for the doctors performing them. Many bill thousands for the operation and then charge about $100 for each in-hospital visit. They stop by and see each of the patients once or twice a day, and some will have several dozen in the hospital, each remaining for many weeks. A profound revelation of the inflated cost of ABMTs came when the Blues agreed to pay for the trial procedures. The insurers quickly negotiated a price drop from the average of $150,000 for each ABMT to $80,000.

Whatever the cost, the crucial question is whether the ABMTs do any good. Unfortunately, there's no obvious way to accelerate the testing of cancer treatments. The only measure of success is whether the cancer returns in several years. If the predictions of the ABMT doctors are true and women refuse to participate in carefully designed trials, it will take even longer to know whether the treatment is effective. For all that time, patients—and anyone paying medical insurance—will remain vulnerable to any doctor who claims his cancer treatment is the best.

ROBERT BAZELL is the science correspondent for NBC News.

SOGRA POSTCARD

ABSOLUT HELL

By Paul Quinn-Judge

We made the flight from Kotlas to Sogra in an antique Antonov biplane, bouncing for ninety minutes through a thick frozen mist just above tree height, and finally promising the local control tower vodka if they would ignore low cloud cover and let us land. The ground below was deserted and snow-covered. Ice had left only a narrow navigable channel in the 600-yard-wide Northern Dvina River. It was early November, but the temperature was already dropping to ten degrees below freezing, and by Christmas it will be about 40 below.

Sogra has about 3,000 inhabitants and is located on the River Pinega, a tributary of Dvina in the Arkhangelsk region, one of the oldest parts of northern Russia. The village's name, like many others in the area, is not Russian: it was left by the Chud, a Finno-Ugric-speaking people who have now disappeared from the area, but who figured in the old chronicles of northern Russia as marauders from the west.

The village was probably founded by colonists from the city-state of Novgorod, one of the centers of political power in thirteenth-century Russia. The locals speak a dialect frozen in time several hundred years ago and almost impregnable to the untrained ear. The settlers, like the marauders, were attracted by the rich forests, the abundant game—grouse, salmon, deer—and the fur. In early Soviet times the area's remoteness and forests drew the attention of the founders of the labor camp system. Kotlas, now a grimy industrial town of 82,000, was the gateway to the Ukhstpechorlag camp system, one of the largest islands of the Gulag archipelago. Sogra was well inside it.

It's still very remote. The village has no private cars and no surfaced roads; a couple of the better streets have beat-up raised wooden walkways. During the spring thaw and the autumn rains, the tracks in and around the village become impassable. The drive to Kotlas takes a day in the winter, when the tracks are frozen solid, but can take a week during the rains. The worst obstacle for miles around is in the middle of the village: a mud hole the depth of a bomb crater.

Little has changed since 1917. Most of the log huts are of traditional design, the front half for the family, the back half for feed and livestock. The huts are still heated by floor-to-ceiling stoves. Women still weave on hand-painted looms. Toilets are a hole in the ground in an outhouse. The best of the Soviet-era buildings, like the local school and the canteen, were brought here from a nearby gulag when it closed down in the early '50s.

City-dwellers like to depict Russian peasants as deeply conservative, passive, and unchanging. In fact the signs of political evolution are here too—disillusionment with Mikhail Gorbachev's long speeches and few tangible achievements, the steady withering of the Communist Party, growing support for the idea of Russia's forgetting about the Soviet Union and going it alone. At the start of the year people were still fascinated with perestroika politics, and the local librarian says they used to head straight for the most outspoken Moscow newspapers or political journals in her little reading room. Now the few people who come by ask for the swashbuckling, distinctly low-brow historical novels of Valentin Pikul, or occasionally Solzhenitsyn.

Meanwhile, like many Soviet villages, Sogra is on the brink of a quiet crisis. Unless change comes soon, the village could quietly turn into one of the ghost settlements that dot the map of Russia. Take the state farm—crop production has been dropping consistently for twenty years. The craggy-faced Adolf had been the local farm dictator. Famous in the area as a poacher

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and masterly political infighter, he gradually reduced the farm to near-ruin, and then kept it there. The worse the farm, the lower the production targets assigned to it, and the bigger the subsidies from Moscow. Locals still recall with awe the way Adolf let a record potato harvest rot in the fields rather than spoil his bleak crop figures.

Sasha Seleninov (half the village is made up of Seleninovs) ousted Adolf earlier this year, shortly after resigning from the Communist Party. Sogra-born and in his late 30s, Sasha says he is willing to sell off his farmland if someone—Yeltsin, Gorbachev, anyone—would pass a law authorizing him to do so. One or two peasants have already taken the plunge and gone into private farming. In the meantime, Sogra is withholding part of the food it is supposed to provide to surrounding cities and quietly calculating how hard the authorities could retaliate if they so decided.

The other source of employment in Sogra is the logging camp. The logging administration occupies its own well-appointed wooden buildings at one end of the village, and its company store seems slightly better equipped than the main village shop. The loggers clear-cut pine, birch, and ash. They take the pine for lumber, leaving most of the other wood to rot on what had once been the forest floor. Game is disappearing. The loggers are denuding the area, and they know it.

Most of the kids who finish the local school get out of Sogra fast. Of the thirty-one graduates this year, twenty-five are definitely leaving, and only two of the others have found permanent work in the village so far, the head teacher says. Anything in a big city, including washing dishes in the grim restaurants of Severodvinsk, is considered better than staying here, he adds.

Alcohol is the main entertainment, the main currency, and the main scourge. "Ask how much vodka they brought in last year," one middle-aged villager, Glafira Selenivova, suggests as we stand outside the canteen one day. She's talking about the Worker Supply Department, which controls the supply of food and consumer goods to the rural shops and company stores. Universally known by its Russian initials ORS, it is one of the major political forces in the Soviet countryside, and seems to have come through perestroika virtually unscathed: it is still the primary source of patronage and power. I later found out why Glafira was so concerned. At two o'clock one morning a young man burst into my room, zombielike and aggressive with booze—her son.

After some hesitation the chairman of the village council, Valentin Popov, answered the vodka question. The provisions barge shipped in 120,000 bottles of vodka and spirit last May. That works out to something like sixty bottles a year for every adult, perhaps the most telling statistic of all about life in Gorbachev's crumbling Soviet Union. It's nowhere near enough, Popov says.

PAUL QUINN-JUDGE is a Moscow correspondent for *The Boston Globe.*

Japan's yen for movie studios.

¥MCA

By Eamonn Fingleton

TOKYO

You have to live in Japan to savor the full irony of Japan Inc.'s sudden fascination with Hollywood. After just five years of rapidly growing interest, Japanese investors now have about a 40 percent share of total investment in new Hollywood movies. Yet Japan is a movie buff's Siberia. Its domestic movie business remains as neglected as ever, and there are only 1,900 movie screens in the whole country—or one for every 65,000 Japanese. (There's one for every 10,000 Americans.)

This pattern of lavishing attention on foreign markets while stiffing consumers at home is a familiar one in Japan, and the explanation is equally familiar: industrial policy. Japan's hard-driving bureaucrats have left little room in their economic planning for such frivolities as recreation. Capacity constraints frustrate the Japanese salaryman's aspirations to the good life at every turn—from foreign travel to playing golf to moviegoing. The resulting exorbitant prices choke off consumption and boost savings. Hence Japan's bulging banks and buy-the-world industrial corporations.

With Matsushita Electric's purchase of MCA for $6 billion last month, the U.S. entertainment industry now accounts for more than half of corporate Japan's acquisition activity in the United States. But it is no accident that Hollywood is getting all the attention. Since at least the mid-1980s, the Ministry of Finance, the pivotal agency of government in Japan, has been quietly promoting Japanese investment in U.S. movies with some surprising tax incentives. Japanese corporations get to write off 90 percent of their investment in a movie in just two years. That is about twice as fast as the depreciation rates the IRS allows U.S. movie investors. Investors also qualify for exceptionally generous tax write-offs for interest paid on the money borrowed to finance movies.

The incentives have helped spawn a slew of investment partnerships marrying Japanese finance and American production expertise. Most are fashioned by such investment houses as Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan, Nomura Securities, and Yamaichi Securities, as well as affiliates of Banque Paribas and Merrill Lynch. Japan's giant trading houses, which often function as an instrument of Japanese industrial policy, have also caught the bug, including Sumitomo Corporation, C. Itoh & Co., Nissho Iwai, and Marubeni. Walt Disney Co. alone stands to collect up to $600 million from a partnership with Yamaichi Securities. Other

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moviemakers who have been scooping up the Japanese cash include Edward R. Pressman, producer of *Wall Street*, and Lawrence Gordon, former president of 20th Century-Fox.

Many partnership deals are never disclosed, so it is tough to figure out the amount of money involved. One Tokyo-based investment banker estimates such partnerships probably invested $600 million of Japanese equity capital in U.S. movies in 1990 alone, not counting Columbia Pictures and the Matsushita-MCA deal. (In the case of Disney-Yamaichi, about $400 million of the total $600 million commitment will be loans raised in the United States.) Christopher Murray, a Hollywood lawyer with the firm O'Melveny and Myers, expects activity to double next year.

The tax incentive package refers purely to direct investments in movies—so on the face of it corporate acquisitions like the Matsushita-MCA deal or Sony's $3.4 billion purchase of Columbia Pictures in 1989 do not qualify. But Tokyo tax experts believe that both Sony and Matsushita could claim huge depreciation allowances if they juggle the ownership of their newly acquired movie libraries so they are held directly by the Japanese parent company. In the meantime, Sony, Matsushita, and their Japanese partners in moviemaking can claim accelerated depreciation on all new movies.

What's the point of promoting another country's movie industry—especially if, as many Japanese investors make a point of saying, they won't interfere in its inner workings? In the view of Clyde V. Prestowitz Jr., president of the American Strategy Institute, a Washington think tank that studies the U.S.-Japan trade problem, the long-term significance for Japanese industrial policy is huge. Control of movie libraries gives Japan a vital bargaining chip in establishing its standards in such new technologies as laser disc video and high-definition television as the world norms. "It is a question of linkages," says Prestowitz. "The Japanese understand better than anyone else that the more links in the chain you control the more power you have to influence things in your favor." As Prestowitz points out, high-definition television may prove a decisive battleground for future world leadership of the electronics industry because it not only will be an entertainment medium; it also will have industrial applications in fields ranging from medicine to aviation.

The Hollywood flurry will also give Japan a capacious new fig leaf to disguise its continuing mercantilism. Analysts of Japanese trade patterns believe the Tokyo authorities will try to count movie investments as Japanese imports from the United States. The strategy is in keeping with a plethora of other mercantilism-driven expedients conjured up over the years to mop up excess purchasing power and keep the consumer on a tight rein. (The MOF's policies have encouraged imports of everything from Boeings—for lease to Third World countries—to Impressionist masterpieces and vintage cars. Less formal bureaucratic incentives have helped promote imports of precious metals and stones.) But from the U.S. point of view, all of the money from showing the movie (and its video) that used to go into American hands will now go directly to Japan.

Of course, those American movies that have been financed largely or wholly from Tokyo stand to gain extra exposure in Japanese movie houses, perhaps elbowing aside French, Italian, and even homegrown Japanese flicks. But Americans shouldn't be too quick to claim a backhanded cultural victory. First the hapless Japanese salaryman will somehow have to tear himself away from work before his customary 9:30 p.m. quitting time.

EAMONN FINGLETON is a Tokyo-based contributing editor to *Institutional Investor* magazine.

How to privatize South Africa.

ONE MAN, ONE SHARE

By Thomas W. Hazlett

The ANC and the South African government appear to be moving closer on at least one major issue: the shape of the post-apartheid economy. The government has agreed to suspend plans to privatize state corporations and other public enterprises, which the ANC says will be needed in state hands to begin a more equitable distribution of the country's wealth. The ANC, for its part, has backed away from its plan to nationalize more industries and has now endorsed some form of mixed economy, which seems acceptable to the government. So everyone should be happy, right?

Well, not exactly. The compromise, although superficially attractive, is missing an important opportunity for democratic advance and economic growth. The ANC is right that old-style privatization—selling off state-owned assets to the highest bidder—would only reinforce the country's highly unequal distribution of wealth. Yet keeping the assets in the state's hands, let alone nationalizing still more industries, would only make matters worse. Not only would it do nothing to reduce the variance between rich and poor; it would slow economic growth, by sheltering industries from the competitive winds of the free market.

What's really needed in South Africa, as in other emerging democracies, is a different form of privatization, a "democratic divestiture," that would literally give state assets directly to the people—one man, one share. In one fell swoop, it would tackle two intractable problems: how to make South Africa's economy more efficient, and how to provide a more secure and equitable base for mass democracy.

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A very large fraction of South Africa's industrial sector—between $80 billion and $200 billion of public assets—is eligible for privatization. The state holds title to vast, inefficiently managed properties, including South African Airways, South African Broadcasting, South African Railways, Armscor (munitions manufacturing), Sasol (synthetic fuels), and scores of "parastatals" (government-owned companies) in communications, manufacturing, electricity, and transport, in addition to millions of acres of land and units of housing.

ISCOR, the giant iron and steel combine, was sold at an auction last year for about $1.4 billion. Now in private hands, it remains one big monopoly. This illustrates the primary economic problem with privatization auctions. Because monopolies fetch higher fees than competitive firms, money-hungry politicians are reluctant to bust up a monopoly before selling it. Privatizing the airways and telecommunications industries in England, for example, raised billions of pounds for the budget. But because both were sold as government-protected monopolies, the privatization didn't do much to foster competition.

A far better approach is simply to turn government titles over to the citizens for free. Each South African could get one share in each privatized corporation. Brokerage firms would be encouraged to rush into non-white communities to trade the shares at market prices. Such large, nationally integrated brokers would protect unsophisticated investors who might otherwise be skinned by sharp traders. (Competition between such brokers would bid up prices to Johannesburg stock exchange levels.) The government would be able to lower barriers to competition under this scheme because the political incentive to allow any industry to remain a monopoly would diminish: the new owners, who would benefit from higher share values in a monopoly market, are also the consumers who would lose still more through higher prices and restricted choices. State-held farmland, homes, and apartments, meanwhile, could be homesteaded by current occupants.

The real genius of the plan, though, is political: by sprinkling equities far and wide, the masses are enfranchised with more than the largely symbolic returns of democratic participation. This is the instant version of Jefferson's nation of individualists, in an era in which yeomen farmers are clearly not the efficient solution. In South Africa, of course, there is the added moral benefit: whites, who represent only 5 million of a population of about 30 million, now own more than 90 percent of total assets and claim about 60 percent of personal income. Under democratic divestiture whites will end up with no more than about 17 percent of the privatized shares.

This past summer the Polish legislature passed just this kind of privatization scheme. Some 7,600 state enterprises, representing 80 percent of the national economy, have been targeted for distribution to all adult citizens. (The idea was developed by the Czechs, but the Poles beat them to the actual implementation.) Democratic divestiture (which has also been called "socialist privatization") should prove to be a stabilizing force in the investment-starved new democracies. As the Polish minister of privatization, Krzysztof Lis, told *The New York Times* earlier this year: "This is the highest grade insurance for Western investors that we are moving to a market economy."

Democratic divestiture in South Africa would result in a windfall of about $4,000 for every man, woman, and child. A family of five would be able to bank enough for a modest home with electricity and running water. Small business enterprises would flourish. Some would elect to stay invested and play the market. Others would just spend the money. Yet all would be economically—not just politically—enfranchised.

Nationalization, on the other hand, would be a tragedy for both blacks and whites, dooming them to the poverty so amply on display in the subsistence societies of anti-capitalist Africa. South Africa's relative wealth (at 6.5 percent of the continent's population, it accounts for 40 percent of its industrial output) is not predominantly due to its color scheme, but to capitalism, however abbreviated. ANC control of existing—or additional—nationalized enterprises would likely change the color of a tiny number of well-connected beneficiaries of government pork barrel, but it would do nothing for general black enrichment.

Nevertheless, democratic divestiture would undoubtedly be opposed by large segments of the ANC, who would see it for what it is: a bribe of capital to the country's masses. Nor will segments of the right endorse such radical measures. Afrikaner extremists will see the policy as a blatant giveaway of "white" resources and a nail in the coffin for apartheid's political constituency, which today owes its slender existence to white fears of nationalization.

The right has historical reason to oppose privatization: enterprises that are now in state hands were nationalized for racial reasons. The "civilized labor policy," the 1920s precursor of apartheid, was explicitly designed to shelter "poor whites" from the competition of skilled and semi-skilled blacks: whites were supposed to be hired and promoted first. But private firms were reluctant to engage in such costly employment discrimination, and the state sector had to be continually expanded to give whites jobs.

Both communism and apartheid survived by shifting control over economic resources to a narrow and loyal class of partisans who mercilessly suppressed the masses under the guise of ideology. The solution to both may prove similar: vesting common citizens with the capital of the land. Ironically, this would take only a literal reading of the ANC's Freedom Charter: "The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people."

THOMAS W. HAZLETT, an economist at the University of California, Davis, is a visiting scholar at Columbia University.

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Tough times for Christian Arabs.

FAITH TO FAITH

By Habib C. Malik

No matter how the Gulf crisis is resolved, there is sure to be one dire side effect: the Islamic fundamentalist surge sweeping the Middle East and North Africa will be greatly strengthened. Defanging Saddam Hussein is liable to release tremendous psychological and spiritual frustrations in the region. Yet any deal that lets Saddam off the hook will be perceived by radicals throughout the Arab world as a victory. Either way, the many native non-Muslim minorities stand to lose, as do those Westernized Muslims in parts of the Middle East. The Israelis are well aware of the threats from this looming fundamentalist wave and possess the military means to protect themselves. But the 10 million to 12 million Christian Arabs, who make up the bulk of the minorities elsewhere, are essentially defenseless.

For years Middle East experts have virtually ignored the plight of Christian Arabs. (The very phrase has an anomalous ring to it in the West.) It's simpler to view the region as homogeneous than to risk offending the majority by highlighting the diversity. This narrow Western approach was reinforced by a decades-old tendency among some Christian Arabs to believe that nationalism could act as a unifying ideology in the Arab world that would transcend religion and relieve the strains in relations between the indigenous Christians and the Muslim majority. This did not happen. More recently Westerners have been hopeful that democratic pluralism would be able to make significant headway throughout the Middle East. A resurgence of militant fundamentalist Islam has dimmed such hopes.

From the early centuries of Islamic conquest, Christian Arabs have experienced successive periods of upheaval punctuated by brief respites of calm in their interactions with the Muslim majority. In all Arab countries except Lebanon, Christian Arabs were long ago reduced by the Islamic governments to second-class, or *dhimmi* (literally, under the protection of Muslims), status. In the past this took various forms of specified restrictions, including paying a special tax, donning distinctive dress, and not being allowed to preach their religion. Today, although some of these restrictions have been eased in certain countries (Saudi Arabia being a notable exception), the *dhimmi* category continues in all countries to mean severe limitations in the domain of personal, political, and religious freedom, particularly the freedom of expression. All this is in keeping with the traditional Islamic view of Christians and Jews as "People of the Book," to be tolerated but never treated as equals.

Now Lebanon's 1 million or so Christians, who constituted the last remaining free Christian community in the entire Middle East, have fallen under the control of Syria's Hafez Assad. By losing political influence and with the obliteration for the first time in Lebanon of a free press, the Maronite Christians are well on their way to becoming *dhimmis*. The process will be complete after the educational curriculum is fully Arabized (purged of Western languages and influence) and changes are made in the free enterprise system.

At the turn of the century many Christians began to take part in the budding movement of Arab nationalism, believing that it would serve as the perfect defense mechanism against persecution, assimilation, or stagnation. Obviously this has not happened. In the period since the Second World War, Arab nationalism has taken on a decidedly authoritarian and anti-Western character, essentially rejecting the West as imperialist. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt embodied this trend. Some in the Greek Orthodox intelligentsia wholeheartedly espoused this Nasserite nationalism, while others like the Lebanese Maronites became outspokenly hostile to things Arab, which incurred the wrath of the Muslim Sunnis.

Now Christian Arabs have to adjust to the emerging post-national phase. Growing portions of the Arab world—including religious conservatives in Algeria, Tunisia, and Jordan—are joining Saudi Arabia in favoring a return to a religious definition of identity. The ravages of the Iran-inspired brand of Shiite fundamentalists in Lebanon and the government-sponsored campaign against the Christians of southern Sudan are the first two stark outcomes of this backlash. And nationalism within one country is no longer any long-term match for a resurgence of Islamic fervor. The fact, for example, that the Coptic Christians and the Muslims of Egypt share strong feelings of Egyptianism is no guarantee for the Copts against intolerance or persecution. In fact, it never was.

In this climate of religious militancy, the hope of speedily introducing democracy as a prelude to peace and tolerance is noble but unrealistic. Since the first stirrings of freedom in Eastern Europe, the West's excitement has also been stirred to package and export the democratic concept to the Third World. In Islamic Pakistan the unprecedented happened: a Western-educated woman, Benazir Bhutto, became prime minister for a brief period. But in the Arab world the democratic ideal has yet to encounter fertile terrain. When democracy is presented solely as a numerical question of literally one man, one vote, rather than as a question of individual rights, minorities in the Islamic world, as well as women, are bound to suffer. No ethic of universal individual rights has flourished in Islamic culture. Islam does not prescribe separation of church and state; and the Middle East—unlike the West—has not undergone 200 years of secularization.

Any radical improvement in the situation of Christian Arabs will ultimately require that new interpretations of

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Islamic tenets be enforced throughout the Islamic world. This means that the category of *dhimmi* must be discarded. Granted, this will not happen quickly, but in the meantime the West has to use its influence to encourage reforms and make room within the international order for such a self-reformulated Islam. Insisting on free democratic elections in a liberated Kuwait and encouraging the gradual opening of Saudi society would be a good first step. Helping Lebanon to recover its lost democracy—once a shining example for the whole region—would be another step.

But the Western mind and Western spirit can act as catalysts toward these ends only when oil and weaponry cease to be the sole criteria for interaction with the Middle East. Political leaders must shed visionless realpolitik in favor of a policy with values and a willingness to apply the leverage at their disposal. It is the only Middle Eastern policy that can earn the respect of the American people. And until it is implemented, a Middle Eastern perestroika will remain an impossibility.

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Who's really paying for the Gulf crisis?

THANKS FOR SHARING

By Robert Kuttner

In fashioning a new politics and architecture of collective security, one could not have asked for a better catalyzing event than Iraq's invasion of Kuwait or a more compleat villain than Saddam Hussein. Not only is there the shared high principle of territorial integrity that nearly all nations support on grounds of simple self-interest; there's also the plain economic fact that the nations of the rest of the industrial world are even more dependent on oil imports than we. It logically follows that those nations would be sharing the expense of the Gulf operation. Are they?

As you will recall, to mollify the early concerns that this was a unilateral American burden, our allies agreed to make token contributions of matériel and troops, and even cash. The latter led to the charge that the American expeditionary forces were, in effect, mercenaries. That was hyperbole. In World War II the United States helped underwrite the Battle of Britain, and that didn't make the RAF mercenaries. Indeed, despite the novel spectacle of America as recipient of foreign aid, the real problem isn't that our allies are contributing money to this venture; it's that they're contributing so little of it.

Among industrial nations, Japan emerges as perhaps the least tightfisted of a stingy lot. Japan is ostensibly disarmed, except for a "Self-Defense Force," which has been limited to 1 percent of GNP. Japan, therefore, is contributing mainly money. Initially Japan proposed a billion dollars. After much arm-twisting by Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, the Japanese agreed to raise this to $4 billion, with $2 billion to be paid by March 1991.

Most of this, however, is not cold cash. Of the first billion actually disbursed, $120 million went for Japanese medical teams deployed to the Gulf. Another $80 million went for twelve freight flights and two sealifts bearing some $600 million worth of military supplies—things like 785 four-wheel drive vehicles, 75 water trucks, 50 freezer trucks, a lot of tents, and so on. Japan has also donated tents, blankets, and medical supplies to the government of Jordan to aid refugees—a grand total of $22 million worth of refugee relief. The capital-rich Japanese government also extended Egypt, Turkey, and Jordan $2 billion in emergency soft commodity loans, carrying an interest rate of 1 percent and repayable over thirty years.

As for actual cash money to defray American costs, $350 million—more precisely, 47.9 billion yen—was wired to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York on October 23 and is being held in Treasury securities pending approval of actual use by Congress. Initially the administration had hoped to use allied contributions as a slush fund. The money hadn't been appropriated by Congress, so why should it require congressional approval? Critics of this approach, both in the administration and outside it, noticed that it looked uncannily like the sort of thing the newspapers would inevitably call an *Iraq*-contra scheme. The White House readily agreed that none of the money could be spent without normal congressional appropriation.

Germany, with other claims on its largess, grudgingly agreed to a total of $2.2 billion in aid. But in keeping with Bonn's preferred low profile and its desire to act through the European Community, half of it either is going to aid friendly "front-line" nations—Egypt, Jordan, Turkey—or has been submerged in a generic contribution of economic aid by the EC. However, much to the consternation of the White House, none of Germany's promised economic aid has yet been disbursed, and won't be until sometime in 1991. Of the remaining $1.1 billion in aid to the U.S. military buildup, exactly zero is in cash. Germany is providing $150 million worth of detection equipment against chemical, biological, and nuclear weaponry; $300 million worth of "transportation services"—sea and airlifts—and $600 million of miscellaneous military hardware.

The Gulf states—that's Kuwait-in-exile, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates—have pledged a total of $6 billion to the United States, including $2.5 billion in cash from Kuwait (most of it not yet delivered) and the rest in in-kind assistance, mostly from the Saudis. That includes water, fuel, local transportation, and quantities of sand to pitch tents and run tanks on. The Saudis are also kindly pumping additional oil to

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make up for the shortfall from Iraq and Kuwait.

In addition to direct military outlay, the U.S. Treasury Department is coordinating an elaborate program of refugee assistance and economic aid from friendly nations, most of it to compensate Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey for the economic dislocation of the conflict and reward their political support. This effort has raised commitments of $13.4 billion to date, most of it ($8.8 billion) from the Gulf states. It has also entailed some tricky diplomacy. The Gulf states do not appreciate Jordan's intermittent footsie with Saddam and won't let any of their money go directly to the Jordanians. This means that the EC contribution of $2.2 billion must be targeted disproportionately to Jordan. However, the Europeans have been slow to pay up; no cash will actually flow until next year, while the crisis is right now. "We're satisfied with the level of commitment, but we remain concerned about the pace of disbursement," says Treasury Undersecretary David Mulford, the choreographer of the operation. "The emphasis was getting the money to these countries on an emergency basis."

To calculate a rough bottom line: allied nations are contributing $13.4 billion in economic aid; the United States is forgiving about $7 billion worth of Egyptian debt. Other nations are spending some $6.5 billion on military aid. The original estimate of direct U.S. military costs for this fiscal year was $15.6 billion; Defense Secretary Dick Cheney has just doubled this, to $31 billion—and that is without a shooting war. By the time the U.S. buildup is complete, we will be contributing 450,000 troops, compared with a combined allied total of 220,000. In short, we are paying more than two-thirds of the freight, and in a war we would probably contribute two-thirds of the allied casualties.

The explicit sum approved by Congress also allows for a substantial amount of wiggle room by the Pentagon, in either of two directions. For example, if a GI is drawing salary in Germany and is suddenly shipped to the Persian Gulf, his salary need not be taken out of the extra funds specially authorized for the Gulf conflict. Conversely, if the Pentagon is of a mind to bust the budget cap on military spending approved by Congress as part of the October budget summit deal, budget analysts say that at least $5 billion could be attributed to the Gulf conflict (hardware, maintenance, fuel, etc., etc.) that would have been spent in any event.

On top of all this, there is a hidden, and astonishingly high, U.S. expense: the new price of oil. The increase in the price of oil attributable to the Persian Gulf crisis is now running at an annual rate of about $100 billion. Whatever sums are being contributed by Persian Gulf states are dwarfed by increased oil profits. This, when you think about it, is nothing short of outrageous. As a result of administration arm-twisting, the Saudis are producing at near capacity, and world oil production is now running virtually at pre-August 2 levels. Yet the wholesale price, having doubled and then come down some, is still at least 50 percent higher than it was before all this started. This increase—based on the nervousness of the futures market—is almost pure "economic rent," i.e., windfall.

A decade ago American policy-makers fought an ideological battle over energy price regulation. After a very messy regime in the Carter years of partly regulated "old oil" and deregulated "new oil," a consensus of economists persuaded policy-makers that it was more efficient to let markets set the price for oil, since price deregulation would create incentives for new exploration. A minority of economists added the qualifier that oil should also be heavily taxed for conservation reasons. Despite the deregulation of oil prices, however, oil continued to be substantially cartelized thanks to OPEC. When a crisis of overproduction and price collapse ensued in 1985-86, threatening political and economic instability from the Texas Gulf coast to the Persian Gulf, the Reagan administration helped the Saudis put the cartel back together again, with a target price of $18 per barrel. That price generally held, with the Saudis adjusting the flow almost like a Federal Reserve of petroleum—until the price war of June and July, the one that precipitated the Iraq-Kuwait shooting war.

In normal times there are good reasons to debate whether oil price and supply should be explicitly regulated, or implicitly cartelized, or left to markets (such as they are). But in a wartime situation it is grotesque to allow "markets" to set a premium price that is pure windfall to producer states—even more so since preventing the extinction of the lead producer state, Saudi Arabia, is the prime purpose of our expensive military expedition. At the very least, the Saudis and the other Gulf states should rebate every nickel of windfall gain that has accrued since August 2, using $18 a barrel as a "normal" benchmark price. That would come to about $20 billion.

Whatever U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf are, mercenaries they are not. Most of the cost of this operation is being borne by the United States. This conflict is entirely tangential to the former axis of the cold war and to other recent geopolitical alignments; our allies include the Soviet Union, as well as radical and moderate Arab states. One could hardly imagine a more topsy-turvy reconfiguration of power. Yet one constant has carried over. The United States has retained its self-conception as superpower, while our closest friends in Europe and Asia continue to be free-riders.

America's prime economic sin, repeatedly raised by our allies, is the chronic American budget deficit—which the military buildup only worsens. But rather than simply flaying America's allies, we should understand the dynamics of co-dependency. As long as the United States keeps calling the tune, Europe and Japan will insist that the United States keep paying the piper. The Persian Gulf crisis should have been the first conflict of a new, post-cold war concert of great powers. Instead, it may be the last gasp of an enervating Pax Americana. One can only wonder what kind of military or financial crisis it will take before Europe and Japan are prepared to play geopolitical roles commensurate with their economic power. ●

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The Filipinos' American fixation.

WAY OFF BASE

By Alan Berlow

MANILA

Earlier this year, when it was reported that 8,000 members of the Campus Crusade for Christ were about to arrive in the Philippines, one of the country's most prominent newspaper columnists suggested that their visit might provide a pretext for a U.S. invasion. If one of the evangelists were killed by a Communist guerrilla, he warned, "It would give the Bush administration an excuse to do a Grenada-style invasion"—presumably to secure military bases the United States controls under a treaty due to expire next year.

It probably hasn't occurred to many Americans that the United States might be contemplating an invasion of the Philippines. But anyone who has grazed through an armful of Manila's more than thirty daily papers knows that conspiracies involving the United States are a staple of this city's political culture, and that the half dozen U.S. military bases in the Philippines—in particular Clark Airfield and the Subic Bay Naval Station—are a veritable obsession of the country's educated elite.

The bases—home to about 28,000 servicemen and military personnel—are the subject of ongoing talks between Washington and Manila, which no doubt prompted the latest rash of conspiracy scenarios. In July the bases were linked to the acquittal of Imelda Marcos on embezzlement charges in New York. Writing on the Imelda verdict in Manila's *Daily Globe*, Francisco Nemenzo, chancellor of the University of the Philippines, charged that the U.S. attorney general "sabotaged the case," and that President Bush "holds Imelda like a sword of Damocles above Cory's head as his emissaries negotiate the future of the bases." Presumably, if Aquino kicked out the bases, Bush would forgo a "Grenada-style invasion" and unleash Imelda to wreak havoc on the hapless Filipinos. Another scenario linked the bases to a U.S. decision to withdraw 260 Peace Corps workers from the Philippines. U.S. Embassy officials said they ordered the volunteers out after learning that they might be targeted by Communist rebels, but Aquino's press secretary, Tomas Gomez, detected a more sinister motive. The United States had taken a "predicatory negotiating stance" for the bases talks, he claimed, by hinting that the Aquino government is unstable.

It seems self-evident that the Aquino government, which has been the target of seven coup attempts since 1986 and two within the last year, is unstable. And a regular diet of conspiracy theories could lead one to conclude that the instability extends to a number of the country's politicians, journalists, and academics as well. But the paranoia over the U.S. military presence here is rooted in a long history of U.S.-Philippine relations. It is a manifestation, in part, of a colonial mentality in which Filipinos are perceived as powerless and Americans as larger than life. (The most insignificant dunderhead from a U.S. congressional subcommittee becomes "powerful" and "influential" upon arrival in Manila.) It also manifests a resurgent nationalism, in which the bases are seen as an affront to Philippine sovereignty. This nationalism carries with it a strain of anti-Americanism at one extreme and a certain pragmatism at the other. Last December, after U.S. fighter planes from Clark Airfield squelched a nearly successful coup, the United States was both hailed for saving Aquino's government and denounced for interfering in a domestic conflict. Similarly, though a majority of the Philippine Senate (which must ratify any extension of the U.S. stay by a two-thirds vote) is on record against renewing the U.S. lease, for many senators this is less a matter of deeply held principle than an easy way of garnering a nationalist credential.

The presence of U.S. forces on Philippine soil is clearly a legitimate issue for a culture that has been so heavily influenced by American colonialism. A coherent Philippine identity will probably not emerge until long after the U.S. bases are removed. In the meantime, the average Filipino faces a myriad of urgent problems that his elected representatives have refused to address. Commenting on the persistence of poverty in her country despite the restoration of democratic institutions, President Aquino remarked that "liberty is a poor substitute for food." Likewise sovereignty.

The United States began building military bases in the Philippines right after it stole the archipelago from Spain in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. Although the importance of the bases has declined markedly as U.S.-Soviet relations have improved, the Pentagon would still like to hold on to them. Subic Bay is the best naval ship repair installation outside the United States, providing cheap, highly skilled labor, and the Air Force's Crow Valley bombing range at Clark Airfield is the most sophisticated air combat training facility in Asia.

Philippine politicians are deaf to strategic arguments in defense of the bases. They rarely show much interest in their country's role in Southeast Asia, and their eyes glaze over at esoteric U.S. arguments about "forward-based deployments" and the like. They deny that the bases protect them from foreign invaders, since they don't see any on the horizon. And, having lived for twenty years under Ferdinand Marcos—with the United States supporting him until the bitter end—Filipinos are cynical about American assertions that the bases provide stability for emerging democracies in Asia. The United States has long argued that the bases are essential for protecting commercial sea lanes, but with the end of the cold war it's hard to imagine what

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"naval power" is going to tie up shipping in the South China Sea. (Thus far the bases have played almost no role in the Gulf crisis, although they would become an important source of supplies if war broke out.)

Filipino senators have a harder time ignoring the economic arguments for retention of the bases. Next to the government itself, the bases are the country's largest employer, providing work for 70,000 people, including 20,000 highly prized full-time jobs. Base spending plus U.S. aid bring $1 billion a year to the local economy. U.S. companies have $1.7 billion invested in the Philippines, and they and other foreign investors want the bases to stay. Given the dubious growth prospects for the local economy, interest rates of close to 30 percent, the recent decision to raise fuel prices by nearly 50 percent, and currency that has lost more than a third of its value this year, the Filipinos need all the investment they can get. But simmering right-wing plots against the government, more than fifty bombings in Manila in the past few months, and a Communist insurgency are all disincentives to new foreign investors, many of whom have already found more hospitable climates in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Meanwhile, new sources of cheap labor are waiting to compete with the Philippines in Vietnam and Eastern Europe.

But the economic issues are complicated by the thorny matter of Philippine sovereignty. Many nationalists want the bases out by 1991, insisting that renting them at any price compromises sovereignty and that the presence of tens of thousands of Americans makes it impossible for the country to create its own identity. The fact that Japan and Korea, with more than double the number of U.S. troops on their soil, seem to be suffering no similar identity crisis is irrelevant, the nationalists say, because neither country has had to recover psychologically from being a colony or ward of a foreign power.

Philippine nationalists come in many shapes and sizes, however. President Aquino is a self-proclaimed nationalist who has vacillated on the bases issue for four years. Aquino now says she wants Clark and several smaller facilities turned over next year. But many analysts believe she also wants to make the Americans happy, in part because they rescued her government from the attempted coup a year ago. The nationalism of others in the ruling elite is equally compromised. Filipino politicians routinely travel to the United States to shop, see doctors, or check up on their investments. These lawmakers will vent spleen at the American "imperialists" in the morning and hit up a U.S. Embassy official for a visa over lunch. They read Manila newspapers featuring U.S. baseball and basketball scores, and American columnists on topics of no discernible interest to the average Filipino. Many send their children to school in the States, and most have relatives who are U.S. citizens. An astounding 1 percent of the 60 million Filipinos have applied for residency in the United States.

These people are no more likely to move precipitately against the U.S. bases than they are to address the fundamental problems of Philippine society—and for much the same reason. In the final analysis, their nationalist instincts are tempered by the more immediate concerns of lifestyle: holding on to what they've got.

In this largely agricultural and still impoverished society, there has been no significant land reform because the legislature is dominated by landlords. There is no enforcement of tax laws because only a tiny percentage of the elite bothers to pay taxes. Rather than investing in wealth-creating industries, the rich salt away their assets in fabulously expensive condominiums or U.S. Treasury bills. Vast portions of the Philippine countryside and miles of fisheries have been destroyed by illegal logging; yet the logging continues because corrupt politicians and military officials are profiting. As the countryside is destroyed, more and more people move to Manila, where garbage piles up in the streets or is thrown into the Pasig River—a black, open sewer that rolls past miles of shanties, home to more than a million of the city's poor. At night the wealthy retreat to guarded enclaves where they are surrounded by servants who earn as little as $20 a month. "For the elite," says political analyst Tony Gatmaitan, "the Philippines is a place to enjoy your wealth, make money, and ship it out. They are colonizers in their own country."

Nationalists like to suggest that the country's problems can be solved by removing the bases. Leftists insist there can be no change until the country is no longer owned and operated by the elite. Others say the two arguments are one and the same; that when the Americans leave, the elite will follow, and the Philippines will begin to mend. These arguments overestimate the importance of the bases and underestimate the resilience of the country's oligarchs.

In any case, an immediate withdrawal of the bases is unlikely. The "Out Now" nationalists simply don't have the votes. Filipino elected officials, for all their bluster, are talking more and more about a "phased" reduction in U.S. forces, combined with efforts to convert a portion of the bases to commercial use. Such a compromise would not please those hoping an immediate U.S. withdrawal might trigger the collapse of the current power structure. But it would probably prove acceptable to the Americans (particularly if the door is left open for an extension of their lease at some future date) and to most of the country's leadership. The elite will no doubt accept any agreement that does not encumber its ability to make money, while most Filipino politicians would probably see in such a compromise the best of both worlds. On the one hand, they could hail the reduction of U.S. forces as a triumph of "People Power" and a victory over the colonizers. On the other hand, they would still have a limited number of Americans around to blame for the sorry state of the Philippines.

ALAN BERLOW is a journalist living in Manila.

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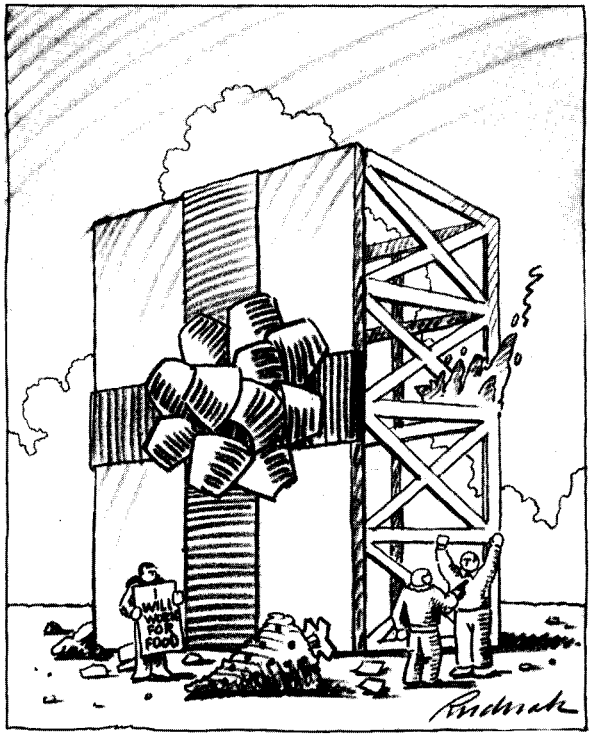
The Grinch has it right.

WHY I HATE CHRISTMAS

By James S. Henry

When I was a kid in Minnesota my family had a huge Scandinavian feast every Christmas Eve, complete with two dozen relatives, three feet of snow, a mountainous evergreen trimmed to the top, a six-course dinner with lutefisk and turkey and eight or ten pies, long-winded after-dinner stories about baseball and World War II, and, of course, lots of brightly wrapped presents. It has taken me three decades of rigorous economics training and life on the East Coast to shake off the warm nostalgia of those holidays. But I am now willing to say out loud what I suspect many Americans are muttering all across the country at this time of year: Christmas has become a net loss as a socioeconomic institution.



DRAWING BY THEO RUDNAK

Although for many years Christmas has been justified on the grounds that it is "merry," rigorous quantitative analysis establishes that the opposite is the case. Despite claims advanced by proponents that the holiday promotes a desirable "spirit," makes people "jolly," etc., the data show that the yuletide time period is marked by environmental degradation, hazardous products and travel, and—perhaps most important—inefficient uses of key resources. The holiday is an insidious and overlooked factor in America's dwindling savings rates, slack worth ethic, and high crime rates. Nor does Christmas truly fulfill its purported distributional objective: the transfer of gifts to those who need them. Moreover, the number of people rendered "joyous" by Christmas is probably equaled or excelled by the number made to feel rather blue. In short, as shown below, although Christmas is an important religious observance that provides wintertime fun for children (who would probably be having fun anyway), it fails the test of cost-effectiveness.

Christmas consumes vast resources in the dubious and uncharitable activity of "forced giving." First, it is necessary to factor in all the time spent searching for "just the right gifts," writing and mailing cards to people one ignores the rest of the year, decorating trees, attending dreary holiday parties with highly fattening, cholesterol-rich eggnog drinks and false cheer, and returning presents. Assuming conservatively that each U.S. adult spends an average of two days per year on Christmas activities, this represents an investment of nearly one million person-years per season. Just as important is the amount that Americans spend on gratuitous gifts each year—$40 billion to $50 billion, according to the U.S. Commerce Department's monthly retail trade sales. Extra consumer spending is often considered beneficial because it stimulates the economy, but the massive yuletide spike creates numerous harmful externalities.

Mistargeted giving is one indication of this waste. According to New York department stores, each year about 15 percent of all retail dollar purchases at Christmas are returned. Allowing for the fact that many misdirected gifts are retained because people feel obliged to keep them (such as appliances, tablecloths, etc., which must be displayed when the relative who gave them to you comes for a visit), and allowing for the widespread inability of children to return gifts, this indicates that up to a third of pur-

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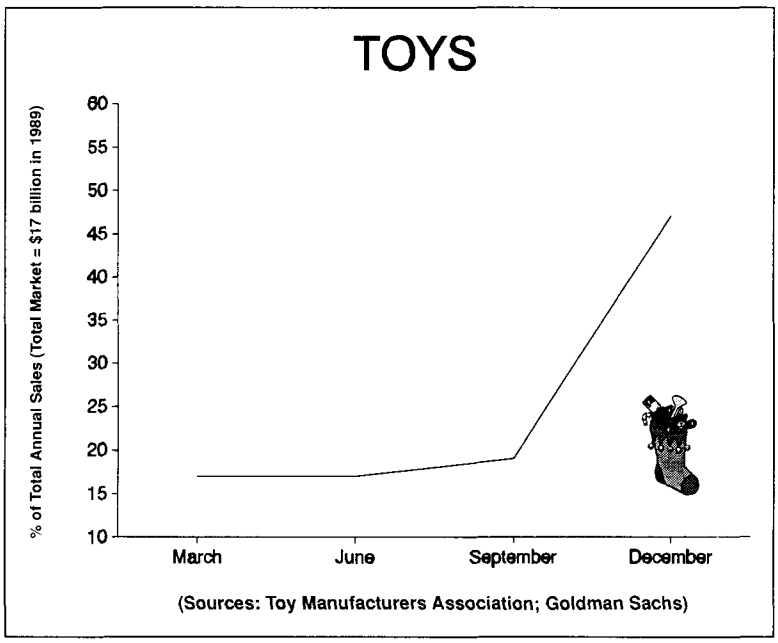
chases may be ill-suited to their recipients. Christmas is really a throwback to all the inefficiencies of the barter economy, in which people have to match other people's wants to their offerings. Of course, money was invented precisely to solve this "double coincidence of wants" problem. One solution would be to require people to give each other cash as presents, but that would quickly reveal the absurdity of the whole institution.

"Forced giving" also artificially pumps up consumption and reduces savings, since it is unlikely that all the silly and expensive presents given at Christmas would be given at other times of the year. One particularly noxious aspect of Christmas consumption is "conspicuous giving," which involves luxury gifts such as Tiffany eggs, crystal paperweights, and $15,000 watches that are designed precisely for those who are least in need of any present at all ("the person who has everything"). Most such high-priced gifts are given at Christmas; the fourth quarter, according to a sampling of New York department stores, provides more than half the year's diamond, watch, and fur sales.



GRAPHS BY DINA STEINKE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Naturally, gratuitous spending delights retailers. Christmas accounts for more than a fifth of their sales and two-fifths of their profits, which suggests a Marxist explanation for the holiday—a powerful economic interest underlying the season's gift-centered ideology. But for the nation as a whole it increases the burden of consumer debt (almost a quarter of Christmas season sales are financed by credit cards or charge accounts, and January is the peak month for credit card delinquencies) and reduces our flagging savings rate (now below 5 percent of national income).

For parents, one especially exasperating aspect of Christmas is mindless toy fetishism. Christmas now accounts for 60 percent of the United States' annual $17 billion expenditure on toys and video games, according to the Toy Manufacturers Association. Much of this rapidly depreciating toy capital consists of TV-show tie-ins (there are 350 separate Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle products and scores more of Ghostbusters and Bart Simpson figures) and expensive gadgets that do not work or hold interest for more than a day. According to the toy association, the country now spends nearly as much on video games like Nintendo's Super Mario and Gameboy (nearly $4 billion), activity figures like World Wrestlers ($500 million), and dolls like Barbie and My Pretty Ballerina ($1.1 billion) as on all retail book sales ($6.6 billion). Since six of the top ten toys are made by Japanese companies, one might adduce a subtle long-run Japanese strategy here.

What's more, toys are unusually hazardous consumer products. The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that each year there are thirty-three deaths and 148,000 emergency room admissions due to hazardous toys, plus 1.2 million toy recalls. (The comparative figures for deaths caused by books and book recalls are zero and zero, respectively.) If these deaths, injuries, and recalls are allocated in proportion to seasonal sales, Christmas emerges as the cause of most of them. And one has only to visit any Toys 'R' Us or Child World at this time of year to see the impact of this season's extraordinary pressures on child-parent relations: distraught mothers dragging tiny toy addicts kicking and screaming away from the latest high-priced, cheesy offerings. All of this unproductive consumption would be much better spent on pencil sharpeners, calculators, and green eyeshades.

Christmas increases congestion. At least in large urban areas, it is by far the most unpleasant time to shop, travel, dine out, or go to the bathroom in a mall. Just when stores are at their most crowded, shopping becomes mandatory; just when everyone else is making family visitations, they are de rigueur. December 21 and 22 are the year's peak dates for air travel, according to the Air Transport Association of America, with 1.7 million Americans per day jamming the nation's airports, as against a year-long daily average of 1.14 million. Twenty-three million travel during the period from December 19 to January 4—just when the weather is often at its worst and the airlines charge their highest prices.

According to the U.S. Postal Service, the volume of mail traffic more than doubles to 220 million letters and 6 million parcels *per day* the week before Christmas, battering a system already weakened by tens of millions of catalogs and advertisements during the previous two months. Telephone calls reach as high

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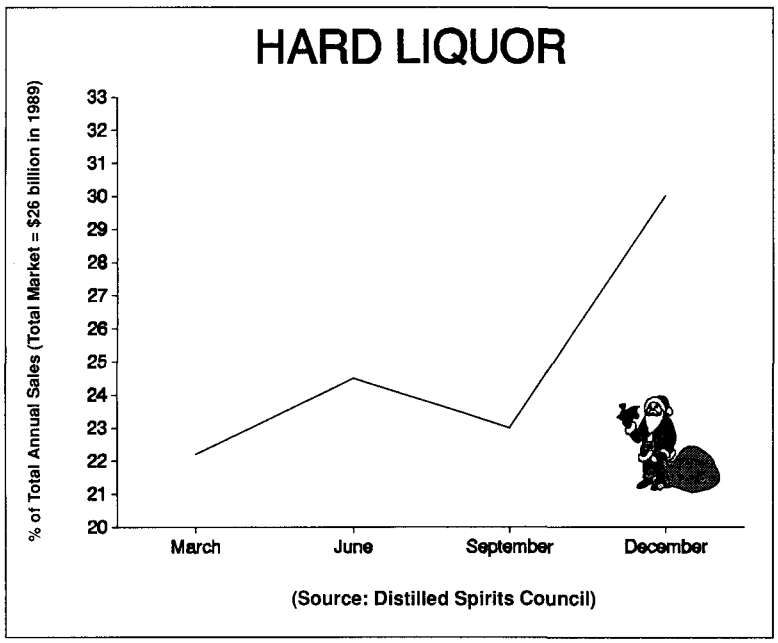
as 131 million per day in the month from Thanksgiving to New Year's Eve, according to AT&T. At many stores and post offices, there are long lines, and costly second and third shifts have to be added to handle them, which consumers ultimately pay for. All of this "peak loading" at Christmas means that airlines, mail delivery, stores, banks, warehouses, telephone systems, roads, and parking lots must be built much larger than if activities were distributed more evenly throughout the year. That wastes precious capital.

Christmas destroys the environment and innocent animals and birds. These have perhaps not been traditional concerns for economists. But when one takes account of all the Christmas trees, letters, packages, increased newspaper advertising, wrapping paper, and catalogs and cards, as well as all the animals slaughtered for feast and fur, this holiday is nothing less than a catastrophe for the entire ecosystem. According to the U.S. Forest Service, 33 million Christmas trees are consumed each year. Growing them imposes an artificially short rotation period on millions of acres of forest land, and the piles of needles they shed shorten the life of most household rugs and pets. All the trees and paper have to be disposed of, which places a heavy burden on landfill sites and recycling facilities, especially in the Northeast.



This year, according to the Humane Society, at least 4 million foxes and minks will be butchered just to provide our Christmas furs. To stock our tables, the Department of Agriculture tells me, we'll also slaughter 22 million turkeys, 2 million pigs, and 2 million to 3 million cattle, plus a disproportionate fraction of the 6 billion chickens that the United States consumes each year. To anyone who has ever been to a turkey farm, Christmas and Thanksgiving take on a new and somewhat less cheerful meaning. Every single day during the run-up to these holidays, thousands of bewildered, debeaked, growth-hormone-saturated birds are hung upside down on assembly-line racks and given electric shocks. Then their throats are slit and they are dropped into boiling water.

Christmas introduces sharp seasonal fluctuations into the money demand. This makes it more difficult for the Federal Reserve to cushion the crests and falls of our economy. This is the peak season for people carrying large denominations around, and currency is a popular Christmas gift mostly among employers. The volume of currency in circulation peaks each year in December, then declines by about 4 to 5 percent.

Christmas leads to a sharp rise in absenteeism and a slump in labor productivity that is unlikely to be recaptured the rest of the year. Many U.S. companies shut down entirely for the two-week period from Christmas to New Year's. For those that stay open, on-the-job performance often plummets because of the season's wild parties and high jinks. Although there is no precise data on absenteeism, according to Labor Department experts, industries like manufacturing and construction are likely to have lower productivity while retailing's productivity is likely to increase.

Far from being "the season to be jolly," Christmas is really the season of sadness and despair. This period's compulsory merriment, hypercommercialism, heavy drinking, and undue media emphasis on the idealized, two-child, two-parent, orthodox Christian family makes those who don't share such lifestyles or religious sentiments feel left out, lonely, and even somewhat un-American. And even in so-called normal families, media hype about the season's merriments often raises expectations and sets up many for disappointment. According to Dr. Quita Mullen, a psychiatrist in Boston, many women in particular exhaust themselves trying to meet both the demands of full-time jobs and the more traditional expectations about what holidays are supposed to be like—provided in part by their (non-working) mothers.

There is also a great deal of emotional stress associated with compulsory overspending and compulsory displays of affection. (Many people reportedly become highly anxious at the sight of mistletoe.) Police, psychiatrists, and hospitals all report that there is a dramatic rise in alcoholic "slips," drug overdoses, domestic quarrels, hotline calls, and emergency medical calls at this time of year. "Any redolent setting can be very sad for people who don't have a dancing partner," says Mullen. "Christmas is one of those times."

Christmas is one of the most hazardous times of the year. The combination of trees, lights, blazing hearths, yuletide passion, and other indoor festivities results in more household fires at this time of

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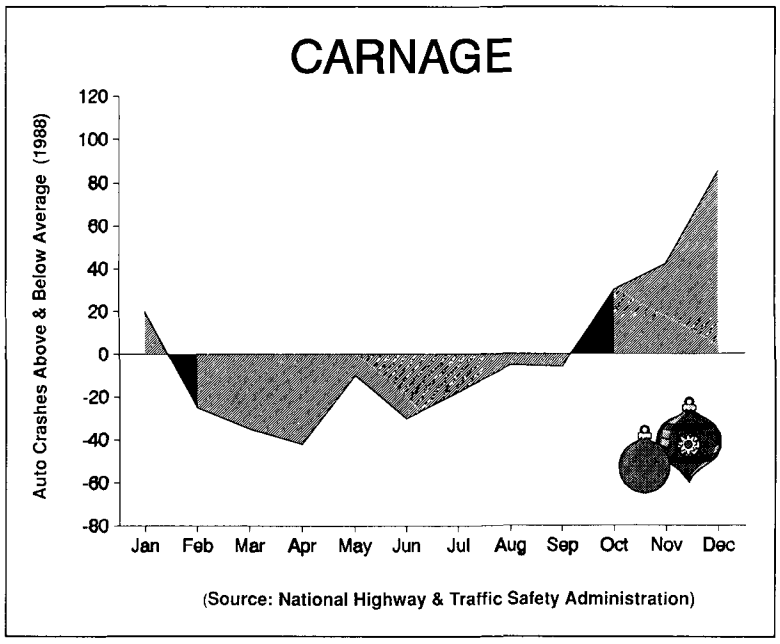
year than any other. The fire department in Washington, D.C., reports that fire calls in December are 40 percent above its monthly average; New York City had 2,800 residential fires last December, as compared with a 2,000-per-month average.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, December is the peak month for drunk driving and "DWI" arrests, which last year totaled 1.8 million. Not surprisingly, it is also the peak month for accidents—because of drunkenness, congestion, and bad weather—with more than 460,000 last year, compared with a monthly average of only 386,000. In just the three days around Christmas last year, 374 people died on the nation's highways. The only consolation is that last year's Thanksgiving was even worse, with 402 deaths. Of course, weather is a compounding factor—for most of us in the colder climes, life would be much easier if we could at least agree to observe Christmas in the summer, when the lutefisk is ripe.



December is also the peak month in the United States for robberies. Last year the number reached about 54,000, according to the FBI Uniform Crime Report, and it is the second highest for auto theft, with about 136,000. Police suspect that all this property crime is because criminals too are propelled by the need to fill their family stockings. December 1989 had nearly 1,900 murders, a disproportionate share. "Christmas is a crazy season," says Sag Harbor, New York, Police Chief Joseph Ialacci. "It's a potpourri of emotional extremes—either quiet or all hell breaks loose. There are more assaults, barroom brawls, and family altercations."

Excessive eating and drinking are used to compensate for the tribulations of Christmas. According to the Distilled Spirits Council and the Department of Agriculture, in the six short weeks from Thanksgiving through New Year's, this year we will consume $18 billion of alcohol—including 81 million gallons of hard liquor—1.1 billion pounds of turkey, and a huge quantity of ham, cookies, pies, eggnog, stuffing, plum pudding, and other trimmings. All this indulgence does little good for the nation's waistline: Christmas is one of the single most important contributors to obesity—the average American consumes more than 3,500 calories at Christmas Day dinner alone. Naturally, January is the peak month for diet plans, many of which end up in failure and despair.

Perhaps most important of all, from a purely distributional standpoint, Christmas almost certainly aggravates inequality, since most gift-giving takes place within the family or the same social class, and doesn't reach the people who really need our help. Salvation Army drum-beating aside, Christmas almost certainly *reduces* our capacity for charity by draining us of wealth that we might otherwise give to the needy, and of our charitable impulses. This is hardly what the person for whom the holiday is named had in mind.

Overall, the message is clear: Christmas imposes a huge efficiency tax on our economy, is hazardous to our health and safety, and does little to further social justice. And the efficiency tax may well be growing in real terms—an analysis of long-term changes in the seasonality of the U.S. economy suggests that the Christmas buying season has been getting longer and longer. Christmas commercialism, of course, is a modern innovation. The ancient Christians did not even observe the holiday until the fifth century, medieval Christians observed it much more modestly, and the Puritans sensibly refused to celebrate it at all. Only in the last fifty years, with the perfection of mass-market advertising and the commercialization of religion in general, has it become such a command performance.

Modern Christmas is like primitive Keynesianism, a short-run-oriented economic experiment that has been tried and found wanting. It is the flipside of the positive contribution the "Protestant ethic" once made to capitalism—Christianity's high holiday now almost certainly makes us feel worse off. What is to be done? I suggest an experimental two- to three-year moratorium on the whole affair, to let us pay our bills and recover some of the distance we've lost. This may sound like tough medicine to youngsters, and to all the other interest groups that have acquired such large commercial stakes in this annual ritual—from bulb manufacturers to ambulance drivers. But the rest of us can no longer afford it. If we celebrate this holiday at all, we should do so mainly because it is over for at least one more year. ●

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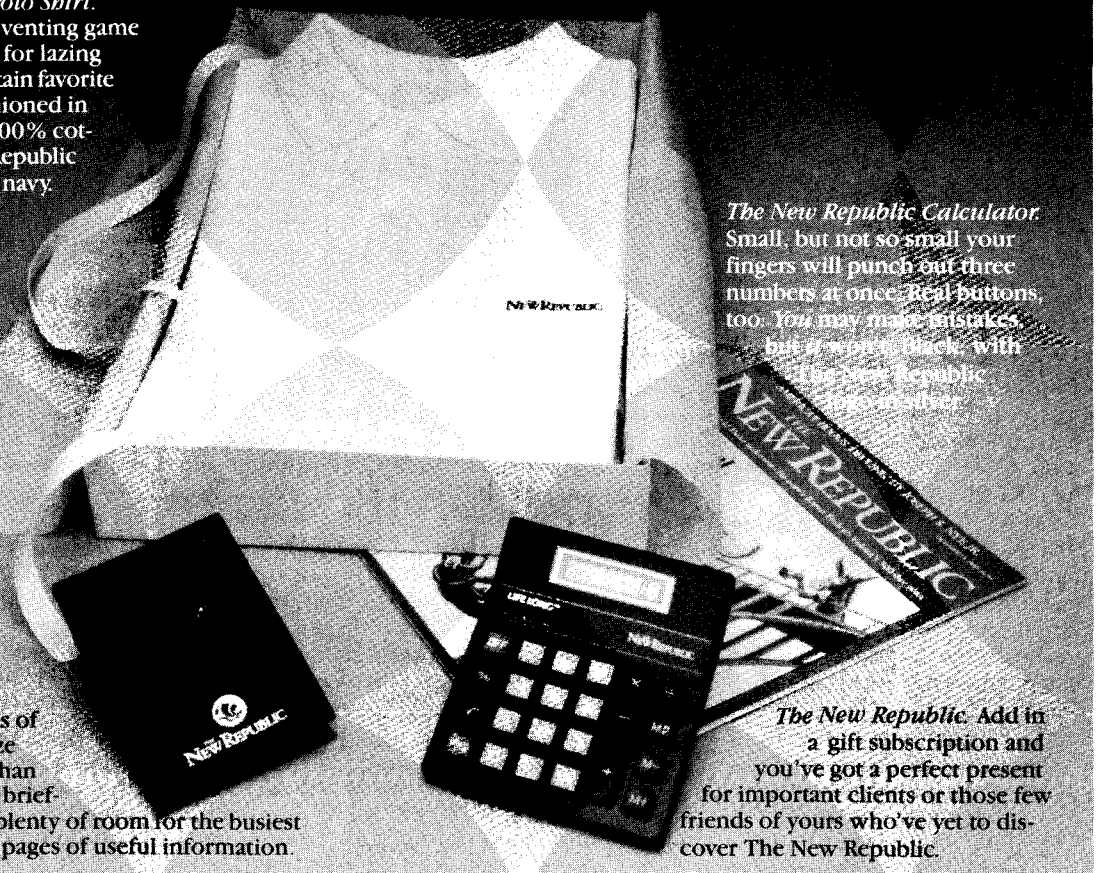

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Forgotten Films

History keeps changing. New research, new perceptions keep the past from being mummified, make it almost as responsive to experience as the present. This is something of a paradox in most histories, but in the history of film it's an astonishment. The remotest past of film (film itself, not the prehistory) is less than 100 years behind us, yet that past is already so obscured that new knowledge keeps altering it.

Kevin Brownlow, the English film historian, has devoted the last twenty years to brushing away some rapidly accumulated cobwebs. His latest book, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Knopf, 511 pp., $50, with 250 photographs), revises some widely held views of American silent films, along with views of the America that made those films. Political and cultural historians have nourished the idea of an American innocence that persisted until World War I and beyond. This idea was reflected in Edward Wagenknecht's history of silent film, *The Movies in the Age of Innocence* (1962), and it is this basic view that Brownlow now skewers. Other film historians, Lewis Jacobs, for instance, have touched on some of the matters that Brownlow raises, but he unifies the argument.

He has proceeded simply by examining available records and seeing available films, some of them thought to be unavailable. This is not a record of secret or smuggled pictures—fraternity house porn, etc. Brownlow chronicles silent pictures that were, for the most part, made by known producers for general release. The fact that these pictures have often been scanted in histories of American film possibly reveals an America not so much innocent as eager to think itself so. The Barefoot Boy Syndrome.

Brownlow's first chapter is about censorship, and he has good satirical fun with it just by collecting data. The urge to censor was bound to emerge quickly in an "innocent" country's encounter with film, especially since, by 1910, 26 million Americans were going to nickelodeons every week. In 1908 Mayor McLellan of New York was so disturbed by the threat of the nickelodeons to morality that he closed them all down on the ground of public safety. It took four court orders to reopen them. Even then children under sixteen had to be accompanied by an adult.

Were the films smutty? Then, as now, it all depended on who was doing the defining. States set up censorship boards, and in Pennsylvania a mother could not be shown making clothes for an unborn child because "the movies are patronized by thousands of children who believe that babies are brought by the stork, and it would be criminal to undeceive them."

Brownlow then devotes ten chapters to the main themes he finds in American silent film. The first of these, of course, is sex. After dismissing "cooch reels," which were sold privately, he turns to the public pictures, notes the lurid titles that were often used on relatively staid pictures, then examines a surprising number of films that dealt with, for the day, surprisingly daring topics.

In 1916 Lillian Gish, the platonic idea of purity, made *The Children Pay*, in which she was a daughter whose life was besmirched by her parents' divorce. The subject was so hot that later the divorce was cut, and Gish was shown to be suffering because she was an orphan. In 1915 Richard Bennett (who late in life played Major Amberson in the Orson Welles film) made a picture based on Eugène Brieux's play *Damaged Goods*, which is about syphilis. That same year D. W. Griffith's company produced a version of *Ghosts*, the Ibsen play in which syphilis figures. I once saw this film; it's a long way from Ibsen, but it's grim enough. In 1917 Margaret Sanger, brave pioneer of birth control, made a film called *Birth Control* and acted in it.

"White slave" films flourished in those days, the most celebrated/excoriated being *Traffic in Souls* (1913). It was apparently a seriously intended picture and was, says Brownlow, "the first film not taken from a novel or a play to receive a Broadway opening."

All the above are only a meager handful of the unexpected items in the sex chapter. The other chapters—on drugs, prohibition, crime, political corruption, women's suffrage, prisons, poverty, immigrants, industry—are at least equally crammed with jolts to our notions of early-film blandness. A few examples:

It's generally known that Wallace Reid, an immensely popular star, died in 1923 of drugs. It's less widely known that

FILMS WORTH SEEING

C'est la Vie. *Diane Kurys's treatment of children, in this film about a French family's summer at the beach, is only one of the delicacies. (Reviewed 12/3/90)* **Dances with Wolves.** *Kevin Costner stars in and directs (his directing debut) this story of a Union Army officer, posted to the frontier, who virtually joins a Sioux tribe. Overlong but wonderful to look at and frequently moving. (12/10/90)* **Mr. and Mrs. Bridge.** *Paul Newman doesn't quite reach Mr. Bridge and Joanne Woodward is too much like Mrs. Bridge, but this rendition of Evan S. Connell's Bridge novels shows some intelligent interest in the drama of dailiness. (12/24/90)* **Tilai.** *Set in a remote village of remote Burkina Faso. A somewhat quiet but almost Greek drama of broken promises, frustrated love, and bloody retribution. The writer-director, Idrissa Ouedraogo, is a genuine talent. (12/17/90)* —**SK**

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his widow then collaborated with the celebrated Thomas H. Ince on a picture called *Human Wreckage*, about drug addiction, and acted in it.

Poverty and the troubles thereof were a locus for a great many films of the era. "The early filmmakers, many of whom came from precisely this background [big-city poverty], believed they wielded a powerful influence for change." But some of the more striking films in this area came from a man of quite different background. In 1915 Cecil B. DeMille, who ended up as an archconservative, made a picture called *Kindling*—about what slums do to children—which Brownlow calls "a socialist tract." In 1926 DeMille made *The Volga Boatmen*, which Brownlow calls the one picture of the day that portrayed the Russian Revolution in a favorable light.

These concerns led inevitably to the subject of labor problems. As early as 1908 came a film called *The Molly Maguires* (though it was very differently oriented from the Martin Ritt-Walter Bernstein film of the same name in 1970). The horrifying Triangle Shirtwaist fire of 1911, in New York, was the impetus for three films, *The Crime of Carelessness* (1912), *The Locked Door* (1915), and *The Children of Eve* (1914). The year 1926 saw *The Passaic Textile Strike*, which combined fiction, newsreel shots of the strike, and reconstruction of events (a practice with a previous history). Brownlow says, "I put off writing this book until I saw that film," and he suggests that some of the shots anticipate *Potemkin*, which had not yet been shown in the United States. The director of the American film is unknown.

This raises the matter of verism. Brownlow jogs the assumption that the use of actual locales became widespread only after World War II. Here are a very few of the many actual places used as silent film settings: Ellis Island (not always the warmly welcoming place it is now accounted), Sing Sing, a cotton mill, a meat-packing plant—for a 1914 film of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*.

Verism extended to the use of famous or infamous persons to portray themselves. Outstanding among these was Iliodor, the Russian priest who had been a friend of Rasputin—then an enemy—and who had fled for his life. Iliodor played himself in *The Fall of the Romanoffs* (1917), which was co-produced by Lewis J. Selznick, father of David O.

Brownlow sometimes details plots at too great length. Sometimes personal stories, better suited to the endnotes, intrude on the historical narrative. Occasionally his language slips: a term like "instant classic" ought to be beneath him. But his book is wonderfully valuable. It enlightens; it shakes preconceptions; it adds fascinating colors to a fabric assumed to be more or less monochrome. In *American Silent Film* (1978), William K. Everson spoke of "a growing suspicion that 1913/14 may be one of the great lost frontiers of film scholarship, likely to reveal more examples of modernity and sophistication in filmmaking than historians have ever suspected." Brownlow suspected. For those years, and for many before and after, he has opened the lost frontiers. ●

What the new immigrants can learn from the old.

The Return of the Melting Pot

By Alan Wolfe

I.

I recall from my childhood in Philadelphia that no discussion of ethnicity could begin without two rituals: a quiz and a story.

The quiz was designed to convey how truly diverse the American population had become. It generally took the following form: What is the second-largest Irish (or Jewish or Italian or Polish) city in the world? The story, on the other hand, went like this: once upon a time America was an empty land settled, except for Native Americans, mostly by folk from the British Isles. When immigrants began to arrive from the poorer countries of Europe, nativist sentiment and racial prejudice kept them in second-class jobs and ethnic ghettos. But the immigrants were a determined lot—how else to explain the risks they took in coming?—and they worked hard to provide opportunities for their children. The second generation, bilingual and able to keep the old rituals even while adopting new customs, succeeded economically, moving out of ethnic enclaves and up the job ladder. Their children, in turn, assimilated, but at the same time they retained an ethnic identity. America is thus defined, as Lawrence Fuchs puts it, by both the *pluribus* and the *unum*. We are similar because we are different.

Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America
by Richard D. Alba
(Yale University Press, 376 pp., $35)

The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture
by Lawrence H. Fuchs
(University Press of New England/Wesleyan University Press, 618 pp., $45)

Immigrant America: A Portrait
by Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut
(University of California Press, 300 pp., $39.95, $10.95 paper)

Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America
by Mary C. Waters
(University of California Press, 197 pp., $32.50, $11.95 paper)

Since the passage of an immigration reform law in 1965, a new wave of immigration has begun once again to alter the ethnic and racial composition of the American population. In 1980, 6.2 percent of the American population was foreign born, nowhere near the 13.2 percent of 1930, but far higher than it had been for the previous thirty years. Moreover, the bulk of this new immigration has come not from Europe, but from Third World countries, especially Mexico, the Dominican Republic, India, China, the Philippines, Cuba, and Vietnam.

There is, consequently, enough material for a new generation of quizzes. How much higher is the minimum wage in the United States than the average wage in Mexico? (Six times.) Which city receives the most Chinese immigrants: New York, San Francisco, or Los Angeles? (Twice as many come to New York as to San Francisco, two-and-a-half times more to New York than Los Angeles.) What country provides the single largest source of Chicago's new immigrants? (Mexico.) Does Canada or Cambodia send more immigrants to the state of Iowa? (Cambodia.) Where, outside of Samoa, can one find an entire city softball league reserved for Samoans? (San Francisco.) For the following countries, are the educational attainments of the immigrants higher than, similar to, or lower than the American average: Nige-

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ria, Peru, Egypt, England, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, the Soviet Union, Portugal, and Italy? (The first three are higher, the next four are about the same, and the last three are lower.) From what country came the 12-year-old girl who placed second in a spelling bee in Chattanooga because she could not spell "enchilada"? (Cambodia.) How many new immigrants come each year to live in Oklahoma? (More than a thousand.)

Not surprisingly, the new quiz is also accompanied by a follow-up to the story, which in its most recent retellings incorporates these newer groups. It is true, the saga continues, that these immigrants are not primarily Europeans; and because of their race and their foreignness, American nativists are already active, insisting on English as an official language, closing union doors to new workers, and, on extreme occasions, engaging in physical violence. But this will pass, as the earlier nativism passed. For the new immigrants, too, are unusually entrepreneurial, and they, too, are determined for their children to succeed. We should keep our borders open, welcome the new immigrants, allow them to keep their language and culture, and enrich ourselves in the process, since diversity and pluralism will not only generate new sources of economic growth, but they will also contribute to the social mosaic that makes our country distinct.

Perhaps one should never ask about stories that touch our deepest identity whether they are true. When we discuss roots, after all, we speak of metaphorical and symbolic longings, not historical or sociological data. Still, the authors of all these recent books are historians and sociologists—professions that like to poke holes in conventional accounts of social reality. When it comes to ethnicity, however, even the most radical sensibility can easily turn to mushy sentimentalism (a temptation that only Richard Alba, among these authors, avoids). For the most part, sociologists want to find new ways to tell the old story, not to question whether the story itself is true.

Since the story of American ethnicity begins with the immigrants who came from Europe in the middle and late nineteenth century, so should our account. After all, the grandchildren of the first and second waves of immigrants from Poland, Italy, and other European countries are now our elderly. What happens to immigrants after four generations in America? Do they retain a strong ethnic identity that affects how they live? Or have they become so assimilated, intermarried, and influenced by commodity culture that their ethnicity, for all intents and purposes, is nonexistent? These questions matter not only for sociological curiosity, but also because the experience of the old immigrants will become ammunition in the war over the new ones.

Mary C. Waters and Richard Alba have written important books about the descendants of the original European immigrants, who are now called "ethnics." Their approaches differ. Alba conducted a random sample of the residents of that region. Waters takes a complementary approach. Having previously, with Stanley Lieberson, examined census data statistically, she chose two areas for further ethnographic investigation. Waters identified thirty residents of two suburbs, one outside San Jose and the other outside Philadelphia. Interviewing these sixty people at some length, she probed, in even greater detail than Alba's survey, what ethnicity meant for them. These two books together make it possible to answer with certainty who won the war between the culture of the old country and the lifestyle of the new.

The new won, hands down. According to Alba's survey, ethnicity barely exists among white ethnics. Only 2 percent of the ethnics that he identified ever had help in business from others within their "clan"; 4 percent experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity; 1 percent claimed to eat ethnic foods daily; almost none were fluent in the language of their ethnic group; 9 percent were curious about the ethnic background of others; about 10 percent claimed to have made a visit to their ethnic homelands within the previous five years; 2 percent were members of ethnic lodges or social clubs; and 11 percent lived in neighborhoods that had any significant concentration of similar ethnics. The great majority of ethnic Americans are intermarried, participate rarely in the culture of their inherited ethnicity, do not pass on their ethnic heritage to their children, and consider themselves, in actual behavior if not always in nostalgic reminiscence, fully American.

Ethnicity, in sum, following an influential formulation by Herbert Gans, has more of a symbolic meaning than a real meaning for most Americans. The symbol, however, is twice removed. Americans have separated ethnicity from the particular symbols of specific ethnic cultures. Americans eat Chinese food at Oktoberfest and stay away from parochial school on Yom Kippur. Ethnicity, which had once been understood as exclusive—if you are Jewish you cannot be Irish Catholic—is now inclusive. Alba's main discovery is the existence of a new group called "European Americans." It no longer matters where your ancestors came from in Europe. What matters is that your roots somewhere at sometime were in Europe. If there really are "European Americans," then a fundamental change has taken place in the way white Americans think about their roots. They are emphasizing universality, not particlarity. Ethnicity, which once implied difference, is increasingly suggesting sameness.

The discovery of "European Americans" also means, of course, that whiteness is crucial to identity. Alba has no doubts that the discovery a few years back of a new ethnic consciousness among European Americans had more to do with a reaction against the civil rights movement than it did with a sudden discovery of the wonders of being Polish. It is the threat they perceive from blacks that drives whites closer to each other. This contributes, needless to say, to the feeling on the part of so many black Americans that America's romanticization of ethnicity shuts them out. Hence the term "African American," which is meant to suggest that blacks, too, are immigrants like everyone else.

It is an understandable enough analogy, but it is also a confusing one. "African American" is a term whose echo of ethnicity backfires on some of its most vociferous supporters, since, in equating voluntary immigration with forced immigration, it plays down the unique horrors of slavery. Race in America, as the linguistic confusion surrounding it demonstrates, consistently confounds the study of ethnicity. Including blacks as an ethnic group speaks to concerns of fairness and equality, but it broadens the meaning of ethnicity beyond that shared by most (white) ethnics. Excluding blacks as an ethnic category seems to suggest racism, at least to those for whom the white ethnics of Bensonhurst or Canarsie are so explicitly racist as to exist beyond sociological sympathy. But it also allows for realism by permitting the sociologist to understand the world as his or her subjects do.

Race and ethnicity live uncomfortably together in the United States. At the very time when white ethnics are discovering that their historical identities are less distinctive, racial minorities are insisting on their racial differences. Much of the tension that characterizes contemporary debates over multiculturalism and diversity may be due to this contrasting trajectory. Among whites, the desire to respect difference seems to come disproportionate-

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ly from those who have been here the longest; these things can be exaggerated, but WASPs seem often in the forefront of multiculturalism in ways similar to their prominence in the drive for abolitionism in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, opposition to special categories for race and special sensitivities to racial identity come from those whose ethnic identity has only recently been watered down into some composite version of Americanism. Black and white America are different from each other also with respect to difference.

Although she used a different methodology, Waters's findings are remarkably similar to Alba's. Her respondents also knew almost nothing of foreign languages, rarely attended ethnic events, and were unable to explain, except in the most cliché-ridden terms, what ethnicity meant to them. Waters's subjects are "into" being Irish rather than Irish. When one of her subjects was asked about her husband's ethnicity, she replied:

> He would have answered Russian Jew and English and Scottish on the census form. He really likes his Russian Jew part. We have a mezuzah on the front door. He converted to Catholicism when he married me. He grew up with his mother and she was Baptist, so he was kind of raised in that tradition. But he likes his Russian Jew part more, he feels close to being Catholic and that part goes together more. They are kind of similar.

Ethnicity, it would seem, has become a commodity: we can shop for it, like we do for cars, changing our models to fit our station in life. If so, one would assume that ethnicity would go the way of all commodities: mass production, cheaper prices, lower quality, eventual homogeneity. From the empirical data presented in both these books, ethnicity in contemporary America seems as thin as beer. (There is a direct relationship between the decline of ethnicity and the decline of beer.) Americans are about as loyal to their ethnicity as they are to their political parties; they identify with one, but they switch to another not always for especially compelling reasons. (The relationship between the decline of ethnicity and the decline of the political parties is also direct.)

Are Americans, then, free to choose even their ethnic heritage? Waters thinks that they are. It is increasingly popular among sociologists to argue that identity is a socially constructed phenomenon, responsive to considerations of power, place, and circumstance. Although it is in the first instance determined by genes, ethnicity is not completely without social choice, as anthropologists have demonstrated. *Ethnic Options* is a title meant to raise an eyebrow.

And yet what makes ethnicity important is surely that it is *not* an option. In stressing the fluidity of ethnic choice—if Italian is a more positive ethnic identity than Scottish, more people will choose Italian to be their ethnic identity—Waters enters the debates about the nature of modernity. For what distinguishes the modern from the traditional, in most accounts, is that instead of being born with our fates determined by our parents' place in a fixed structure, we are increasingly able to choose where and how we want to live. Communitarians who deplore the alienations of modernity lament the hegemony of choice, while liberals and modernists praise it. Both tend to agree, however, that the single most important premodern legacy that survives in the modern world is ethnicity: our ethnic status remains ascribed, not achieved. Ethnic identity is understood to be one thing that we cannot alter.

Because she stresses that "ethnicity is increasingly a personal choice of whether to be ethnic at all, and, for an increasing majority of people, of which ethnicity to be," Waters would appear to be a modernist, documenting the decreasing importance of ethnic identity. It is precisely at this point, however, that Waters retreats into ethnic sentimentalism. For instead of concluding that ethnicity is disappearing, she argues instead that "one can have a strong sense of identity without a specific idea of that identity meaning anything." She even asserts at one point that Americans hold on to their ethnicity "tenaciously," a formulation that is completely unsupported by the actual data she so painstakingly collected. In her account, ethnic choice reinforces ethnic identity, producing something of a conceptual muddle.

Waters has an attractive rationale for trying to reconcile ethnic choice and ethnic identity. She wants to believe that ethnicity allows Americans to solve the contradiction between premodern communitarian longings and modern individualist desires: we can have something to which we belong and at the same time be free to choose. But the formula does not work. The distinctions will not be so easily erased. Waters confuses two quite different things: the choice of whether to be ethnic and the choice of which ethnicity to be.

It makes perfect sense for people to decide that they would rather not be ethnic, at least not in any way that constrains their freedom of action and belief. But Waters argues that people can pick and choose from a template of various ethnic

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characteristics: "With a symbolic ethnic identity an individual can choose to celebrate an ethnic holiday and refuse to perpetuate a sexist tradition that values boys over girls or that channels girls into domestic roles without their consent." To do so, however, is not to construct a new ethnic identity, it is to reject ethnicity altogether. Ethnicity with freedom of choice is no longer ethnicity. Waters's claim that we can take the best in our ethnic traditions while leaving behind the worst reveals a complete lack of a tragic sense of life. Ethnicity is a package deal: when you are loyal to an inherited tradition, you take the good with the bad. The challenge of ethnic life lies precisely in the unstable combination of being tied to a clan and wanting to be free of the clan. Waters has not shown that people have ethnic options; she has shown only that they have opted not to be ethnic.

There may well be good reasons for Americans to have made that decision. If everything is voluntaristic, the individual is not ethnic. But if everything is clan, the individual is not modern. Americans have chosen to be modern. To be sure, America is a less interesting place after assimilation has run its course—its food more bland, its symbols less rich, its language increasingly homogeneous. But interesting places have a way of encouraging their people, when not killing each other over roots, to retreat into that special kind of narrowness and superstition that ethnicity alone can legitimate. We should be proud, then, that ethnicity means so little to us, that we have transcended tribal needs. But all too many writers on ethnicity feel the opposite: they comb the country for every shred of ethnic consciousness, and prefer to praise it, rather than the assimilation that renders it harmless.

Two losses result from the sentimentalization of ethnicity. The first is to the immigrants themselves. To "make it" in this country required transitions of such difficulty that people often sacrificed their entire lives so that their children would feel at home. (Imagine contemporary Americans sacrificing even a weekend.) Only when the work was done—the language mastered, the parochialism transcended, the passage assured—could they, or their children, afford the token gestures toward their origins that passes for ethnic consciousness in America. Celebrating people for what they tried to escape demeans the importance of what they wanted to become. If what passes for ethnicity seems so easy, that is because the transition from ethnicity was so hard.

Ethnic sentimentalism also demeans those who already were here. The truly socially constructed identity is Americanism, not ethnicity. Hence those who made themselves into Americans have every right to insist that their identity as Americans be taken seriously, even if it is an identity rooted in white bread and suburban tract housing. Americanism is a continually evolving identity that changes with each new group that arrives—but only by insisting that all new groups share in its prerequisites. In many sentimentalist accounts (though not in Waters's) long-term residents of this country who insist on English and the shedding of customs of origin are portrayed as nativist or ignorant. They should be more realistically viewed as descendants of those who struggled to become American. Their insistence embodies the memory of a struggle that ought not to be extinguished.

II.

The original immigration from Europe, it would appear, turned out to be neither as the nativists nor as the pluralists would have it. Contrary to what nativists believed, nearly all the original immigrants wanted to be as American as fast as possible. They have, along the way, not diluted American culture, they have enriched it enormously. But neither were the pluralists correct. America did not find a balance between difference and sameness. We solved the problem of ethnicity by transcending it. Groups do not live in peace with each other in the United States; individuals do. The only reason that we are not Lebanon (or Canada) is because language, theology, and culture have less than total meaning to us. Americans, who are among the most religious people in the world but also among the least theological, talk about ethnicity so much only because they have so little of it. Ethnic Americans reinvented Americanism, not ethnicity.

If this conclusion is true, there are significant lessons to be learned with respect to the wave of immigration that has swelled in America since 1965. Lawrence Fuchs as well as Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut believe that the experience of the previous wave of immigrants leads to the conclusion that we should welcome the diversity brought by the newest wave; their adherence to the grand story of immigration is unshakable. In so doing, however, they tend to sentimentalize the experiences of the new immigrants in the same way that Waters sentimentalizes the persistence of ethnic identities among the old immigrants. And, once again, it doesn't work.

Fuchs was executive director of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy before he began to teach American civilization and politics at Brandeis University. His sprawling book attempts to be a history of diversity in America. Fuchs argues that the unifying culture of America is neither religion nor folk-myth, but instead a political culture created deliberately by the Founders and revitalized by each succeeding generation. We are, in that sense, the only true sociological experiment in the world: we rely on institutions such as schools, symbols such as flags, and inevitable transitions in life such as aging to make us a people.

Fuchs does a good job of telling what the resulting civic culture is not, but he never tells exactly what it is. Nor could he. A culture designed to be inclusive to all will resist precise definition. As Fuchs himself points out, it would be difficult to find a more "ringing affirmation" of the civic culture than these inspiring words uttered by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1942: "The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race and ancestry." That Roosevelt was uttering these words to justify the internment of Japanese-Americans in relocation camps does not testify to a "deep ambivalence" about race, as Fuchs suggests, but to the fact that our civic language had become so broad as to mean almost anything.

By placing so much explanatory power on civic culture, a concept that resists precision, Fuchs inadvertently confirms the analysis of Alba and Waters. Our civic culture can be so inclusive because it requires so little to be shared. Even the story of immigration itself is too restrictive to be part of the civic culture, because, as Fuchs properly emphasizes, civic culture must include Native Americans, who were already here, and blacks, who came here against their will. Culture is a limiting, rather than a universal, concept. A culture that incorporates everyone—those who were here as well as those who came, those who came from Europe as well as those who came from Asia, those who came because they wanted to and those who did not—is not going to attach costs that will be especially high.

America's uniqueness lies in the low costs that its culture imposes, a feature of our nationhood that surely makes us attractive to those looking for a new home. But as advantageous as it may be to have such an inclusive civic culture, not everyone benefits. The tension between eth-

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nicity and race may be exacerbated by such a loose culture. Fuchs writes that "the problems of those in an ethno-underclass—the chronically poor native-born blacks, Indians, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans—persisted despite the triumph of the civic culture." But the problems of an "ethno-underclass" may have worsened *because* of the vagueness of our civic culture. When nearly everyone is considered an insider, the desperation of the remaining outsiders will intensify. It is never easy to be excluded, but to be excluded precisely at the time that others are being included is devastating.

When costs are low, moreover, some will argue that they may as well be abolished. The dominant sentiment among right-thinking and liberal-minded Americans who worry about immigration is that we should help the recently arrived make the transition to America as smoothly as possible. (Here again the conflict between race and ethnicity asserts itself, for in so doing, we often downplay the needs of those already here.) Such sentiments are an improvement over the often cruel ways in which earlier immigrants were deprived of basic human rights and exposed to prejudice and degradation, but the desire to transform a low-cost culture into a free culture is nonetheless misguided. As difficult as it may have been for the older immigrants, there were triumph and dignity in meeting the costs, satisfactions that will be denied to the new immigrants if we lower the costs of our common culture even further.

One cost that the old immigrants paid to participate in the civic culture was to learn English, or to ensure that their children did. There is substantial evidence that the new immigrants share the same desire. A "submersion" program in English in El Paso was so successful that many Latino groups that had favored bilingualism changed their minds. The International High School in Queens, which sends 85 percent of its immigrant students to college, ignores bilingual methods. Writers like Richard Rodriguez have written movingly of the importance of learning English. Stella Guerra, a Mexican American woman who became deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force, once said, in opposition to an insistence on Spanish, "We should never lose our ethnic identity . . . we are Americans first." Yet an insistence on English may be in violation of federal policy, which, like the Democratic Party platform of 1984, seeks "language barrier-free social and health services."

The subject of language is the single most emotional issue in the debate over the new immigration. (Language has inflamed political passions in places as different as Canada and India.) It can lead thoughtful and well-meaning observers quite astray. Portes and Rumbaut provide an example. They have written a wonderful book, a richly textured map of the new immigration that is as diverse and pluralistic as the new America they rightly celebrate, but they lose all perspective on the language issue. They, too, want to render linguistic ability barrier-free, rather than viewing barriers as necessary for achievement and growth, as a rite of passage that makes a new identity worth having.

"Unlike in several European nations, which are tolerant of linguistic diversity," they write, "in the United States the acquisition of non-accented English and the dropping of foreign languages represents the litmus test of Americanization." Yet no country is more chauvinist toward language than France; the Scandinavians insist on linguistic competence to participate in the welfare state; German Swiss rarely learn Italian Swiss, and the Belgians are even more divided than they are. The truth of the matter is that Americans insist on English for reasons that have little to do with language. If language had some kind of transcendent meaning for us, we would take pride in the teaching of English, which we do not. If we cared more about English, we might learn to respect Spanish. And there is no such thing as non-accented English, or, for that matter, Spanish.

Portes and Rumbaut rightly fear a movement that would prevent immigrants from speaking their own language at home. But if there is such a movement in the United States, they fail to find it. Groups like U.S.ENGLISH, efforts like Proposition 63 in California, or repeated attempts to pass an English Language Amendment to the Constitution want the *official* language of the United States to be English. Such movements may indeed be using their official position as a smoke screen for a larger social and cultural agenda designed to drive out all other languages in private use, but Portes and Rumbaut do not make that case. There is good reason not to support such movements, since they fail to recognize the tremendously positive contributions made by recent immigrants to American life. Yet Portes and Rumbaut consistently confuse the issue by arguing as if opposition to bilingualism were opposition to the Spanish language, when, in fact, many of those who oppose a rigid insistence on bilingualism in the schools (such as Rosalie Pedalino Porter, the author of *Forked Tongue: The Politics of Bilingual Education*) are not only fluent in Spanish, but have great respect for lan-

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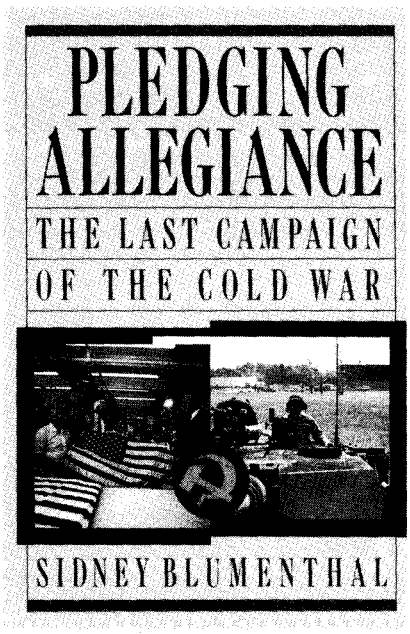

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guages other than English.

The fact is that all immigrants will learn English, as Portes and Rumbaut themselves point out. Why insist, then, on the official recognition of more than one language? The answer is that some immigrants lose their original language more slowly than others. "Asian immigrants," Portes and Rumbaut write, "appear consistently more inclined to shed their native tongue than those from Latin America." But this difference in linguistic assimilation is just as much an argument against official bilingualism as an argument for it. For not only would an insistence on English tie new immigrants and old residents together, it would also tie the new immigrants themselves together. Pakistanis and Peruvians, if they are to have anything in common, will have to talk to each other in a language foreign to both of them.

The story of immigration cannot be told unless there is a language in which it can be told; and that language, in this country, will be English. One can respond, as some Mexican-American activists do, that immigrants from Mexico, in coming to Texas or California, are simply coming home, but that argument, carried to its conclusion, suggests that Spanish-speaking immigrants ought to be held to different linguistic standards than all other immigrants. It would be a tragic ending to this wave of immigration if those coming from Spanish-speaking countries were not to be held to the same standards of membership as those from other countries. An insistence on bilingualism could drive a wedge between Latino and other immigrants if the latter were to perceive the former as more interested in the preservation of Hispanocentrism than in the actual lived realities of immigrant life in American cities.

Battles over language are battles over culture. Some school districts require not only instruction in the child's native language, but a (positive) introduction to his or her culture as well. In this sense, the issue of bilingualism in the elementary schools is the first step in the debate over multiculturalism that American universities are now facing. But there is one important difference: debates over multiculturalism are often strongest at private universities (such as Duke). But unlike elite universities, which by definition are restrictive, public schools are at the heart of America's common life: for the new immigrants today, as much as for the white ethnics three generations back, the school is the place where one learns about America. Putting aside technical issues, such as the inability to find teachers familiar with 145 cultures, it seems a striking comment on American life that we have become so defensive about our common values that we no longer feel confident in teaching them to those inspired by those values to make the journey here.

The battle over bilingualism tends to take place over the heads of the immigrants themselves, who in general only want to learn English as fast as they can. Interest groups (and intellectuals) with a stake in politics and policy, on the other hand, make the issue of bilingualism into an ideological litmus test: those on the left are presumed to be in favor of cultural diversity, while those on the right insist on one standard for all. But right and left have little to do with immigration, and the attempt to find "correct" positions on the issue can only lead to trouble.

Portes and Rumbaut provide a further illustration of why it makes little sense to politicize the question of immigration. A hallmark of being on the left is to sympathize with those who are poor and oppressed. But who, in matters of immigration, is poor and oppressed? Obviously there are immigrants who would seem to qualify: Chinese working in New York sweatshops, Mexicans tilling the California fields without access to toilets, Vietnamese struggling to make a living in an alien environment. Yet such a picture is superficial. For one thing, many new immigrants are relatively well-off, as Portes and Rumbaut insist. Wanting to respond to one nativist charge—that these immigrants will bust our relief roles—they pay insufficient attention to the complaint, most often heard from blacks with respect to Cubans in Miami, that public policies often favor recent immigrants over those who have been here much longer. One difficulty that has always faced sentimentalist accounts of immigration is that groups generally viewed as sympathetic to the left, first the labor movement and now blacks, have opposed unrestricted immigration, while those associated with the right, business and certain segments of the upper class, favor it.

III.

Both Fuchs and Portes and Rumbaut have written fact-filled books that will be of significance to the debates over immigration, but in both their books political sympathies interfere with clearheaded analysis. Fuchs is surely correct to celebrate American tolerance, but he fails to realize that there may be problems involved in welcoming everyone too readily. Questions of belonging and membership lie at the heart of a society's self-definition. Without rituals and tests of membership, there can be no society worth having.

Fuchs, like Waters, tends to be inhospitable to tragedy, not sufficiently respectful of the role of contingency in human life. He is, on the one hand, unusually sensitive to the dilemmas of race and ethnicity; one of his chapters is called "Respecting Diversity, Promoting Unity," as good a four-word description of the problem as one can find. But Fuchs's proclivity for optimism leads him away from a full-scale treatment of the dilemmas he raises: the above-mentioned chapter, which is about language, never directly confronts the conflict between a subculture's tradition and a national culture's obligation.

Only when Fuchs discusses black-Jewish relations does the reader come away with a sense of how difficult it is to incorporate both the theme of merit and the theme of counting by race into the civic culture. It is at that point that his overarching theme breaks down, but it is also at that point that his book becomes most interesting. Fuchs in general argues that the racial and ethnic composition of the American population changes dramatically while the civic culture stays the same; only when he acknowledges that the latter can change along with the former does his book set aside sentimentalism.

That membership has, and ought to have, its price is a conclusion that Portes and Rumbaut also wish to avoid. Their argument is directed to the question of whether immigration has been positive or negative for the United States, a question they answer strongly in the affirmative. But this is in many ways not the important question to ask. A framework organized around a balance sheet approach, in which the assets and the liabilities are added up, is too rooted in utilitarianism to address why immigration has such symbolic importance for most Americans. Costs and benefits do not explain opposition to bilingualism, tension between Koreans and blacks in Brooklyn, the loyalty of Cuban Americans to the Republican Party, or Asian success in schools. While the new immigration is in part an economic story, it is above all a story of identity, a dimension that Portes and Rumbaut insufficiently acknowledge.

One way to illustrate the incompleteness of such an account involves the question of whether those who come here ought to have obligations to the American political system. (Immigrants in Scandinavia, for example, can vote in local elections.) Instead of discussing the obligations of immigrants, however, Portes and Rumbaut concentrate on the

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rights of immigrants, as if the country to which they have moved is a mere contingent factor in their planning. For example, they point out that many immigrants come here hoping to earn some money, after which they can return home; and that others, such as those from Colombia, have the right to vote at home even while they live here. All this may be good for the immigrants. It may even contribute to the economic well-being of the United States. But from the perspective of symbols of belonging, which are already weak enough in the United States, something is wrong when neither entering nor leaving the United States carries obligations.

It is inevitable that the experience of earlier ethnics will constitute the lens through which the future of the new immigrants will be pictured. Even Portes and Rumbaut, who begin by saying that "theories that sought to explain the assimilation of yesterday's immigrants are hard put to illuminate the nature of contemporary immigration," end by saying that "restrictionists' gloomy rhetoric concerning all present immigration is likely to prove as groundless as in the past." I believe their optimism to be fully justified. The new immigration ought to make all Americans proud, both of ourselves and of those who have overcome so many obstacles to come here.

But if we are to be made proud, it will not be by welcoming immigrants with no strings attached. Neither the immigrants themselves nor those who already live here can feel good about a process that refuses to set conditions. For all the passion that questions of diversity generate, a fairly well-understood compromise has been worked out between residents and newcomers. You are welcome here, the residents say—and Fuchs is right to insist that this hospitality is different from earlier nativism and worth celebrating—but there are costs. You have to learn our language and accept our customs, overcoming the same obstacles that our ancestors overcame. We accept your offer, respond the new arrivals, the great majority of whom are non-political, hard-working, determined to learn English, and avid believers in the importance of belonging. Passing tests of language and culture become for them confirmation that the risks they took in exposing themselves to statelessness paid off in new statehood.

Not everyone accepts this compromise fully, and battles over the terms of the compromise still take place. And the terms of the compromise are not clear with respect to racial minorities in this country, who already know the language and who possess formal rights, but whose

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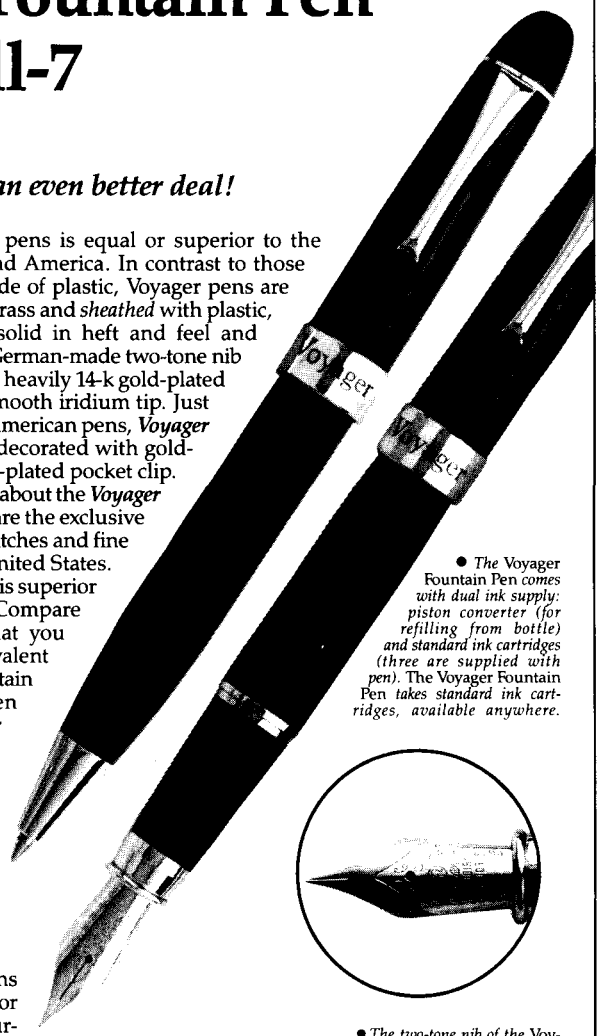

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economic desperation prevents assimilation into a middle-class civic culture. For these reasons alone, we ought to be grateful to those who tell and retell the story of race and ethnicity, for they remind us of how important and continuing the story can be. In one sense, the story does have a happy ending: Americans are now far more tolerant toward immigrants than they were in the nineteenth century.

But in another sense the story has not ended, and it is anything but happy. The America to which immigrants are coming is unwilling, uncertain, and insecure: unwilling to grant full status to those who have been here for a very long time even while it welcomes the new; uncertain about what the rules of membership ought to be and how to insist upon them; and insecure about whether it remains possible to have a national identity at a time when multiculturalism provides a ready and seemingly democratic excuse for those who would give up on the never-ending task of constructing and reconstructing a nation out of racially and ethnically diverse ingredients. ●

First Serve

BY MICKEY KAUS

Gratitude
by William F. Buckley

(Random House, 183 pp., $16.95)

John Kenneth Galbraith once urged William F. Buckley to give up hectic public life: "Come to the academy and write *books*. It is only *books* that count." In 1971 Buckley chronicled a week's worth of his activities and published the result under the title *Cruising Speed*. It was partly an attempt to justify his failure to take Galbraith's advice. "Cruising speed," according to Buckley's biographer, John Judis, "was Buckley's metaphor for a life, as he saw it, of steady, unremitting good works. It was a life that was justifiable even if it didn't produce . . . big books."

That leaves little books. *Gratitude* is the latest. The intention is large enough: Buckley is arguing for a federal program that would eventually sign up 80 percent of America's youth for one-year stints of national service, "inducing" their participation through elaborate rewards and penalties. National service is an especially ripe topic because it's one of those ideas that well-meaning people instinctively favor in a hollow sort of way. I'm for national service; if you ask me, that's what I'll say. You don't even have to ask; I've written several articles calling for it. But I haven't completely convinced myself, much less anybody else. Buckley's book could have been the one that came along and converted us, that turned a stock patriotic platform-stuffer into a genuine cause. He's not quite up to the job.

The problem isn't *Gratitude*'s brevity, though at 183 small, wide-margined pages for $16.95 it's no *Consumer Reports* Best Buy. The problem is that it's lazily researched and sloppily argued, desultory and diffuse when it should be intense and impassioned. If a Martian, or an Englishman, were to read this book after being told William F. Buckley was a leading light of American conservatism, he would be baffled. He might conclude that American conservatism was in a fairly advanced state of decrepitude.

Does Buckley have editors? You read through *Gratitude*, mentally adding the comments that should have been appended drafts ago. Buckley discusses sentiment for national service among students: "It is impressionistic to say they are divided, and I do not have a statistic to suggest the size of the affirmative, over against the negative ranks." *[Can't you get one? Ed.]* Buckley notes that 500,000 youths have refused to register for the draft. "Presumably they foreswear federal aid. Either that, or else the law is not being enforced." *[Which is it? Is the answer so hard to find? Ed.]*

Buckley promises ("perforce") to "look about us, pondering the role that national service, in whatever form, plays elsewhere." He then offers a short description of national service in Switzerland. It turns out the Swiss service is entirely military, while Buckley wants civilian service only. ("To emulate the Swiss example in the United States would be foolish.") The experience of other countries such as Germany and France would therefore be far more relevant, since their national service plans involve civilian work. But Buckley doesn't even mention them. Apparently the "Swiss example" was handy because, as Buckley notes, he spends every February and March there. Germany and France may have had success with civilian service, but the skiing isn't nearly as good.

Buckley's style is gratuitously demanding. Lots of esoteric words, convoluted sentences, and asides. He can be eloquent, but too often the pretension-to-payoff ratio comes out on the high side. Occasionally the writing isn't esoteric or demanding, it's just bad. Page 62 features this mind-clearing sentence: "We have in the question of compulsory national service extra-market factors pressing on a concrete situation seeking to affect human behavior."

To his credit, Buckley seems acutely aware that his chosen subject lends itself to pompous vagueness. It's hard to discuss civic virtues without sounding like a hack speechwriter. Buckley tries to avoid hollow rhetoric by imagining, in "deglamorized" detail, how a hypothetical high school graduate might approach a year of service tending to the residents of a nursing home. These passages work, in part because Buckley seems to know a bit about the pathos of those institutions. Within pages, though, he's back to speechwriting. When he says he wants "a national morale at home reaching as high as the Alps," you sense that he's given up.

Enough about *Gratitude* as a book. What about Buckley's idea, however imperfectly presented? Why national service, anyway? Actually, national service advocates offer at least five distinct reasons:

1. To build character, in particular to counteract the perceived selfishness of youth, to lift them out of what Buckley calls the "trough of self-concern."

2. To repay a social debt. Buckley emphasizes the personal satisfaction of a "formal attempt of requital" for benefits inherited from previous generations—hence his book's title. Others might invoke a concept of duty that has nothing to do with individual feelings of gratitude.

3. To mix the various classes of society in a common endeavor. The Gulf crisis has renewed the debate about whether rich and poor should share the special risks of combat. But class-mixing can also be valued for its own sake. Buckley, as noted, is not talking about a military draft.

4. To provide needed services—caring for the sick, conservation, etc.

5. To "salvage impoverished youths" by giving them work experience, training, and opportunities for social integration.

Now, it's no argument against a pro-

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posed reform that it will achieve five objectives instead of only one. The various goals may even be mutually reinforcing. Buckley points out that shared experiences (#3) tend to breed friendships that tend to diminish self-devotion (#1). But the goals may also be conflicting. Buckley dismisses #5, arguing that "there is one decisive way to sentence national service to death, and that is to conceive of it as a fight against poverty." He worries that his program will be judged a failure if it doesn't achieve the "eternal ambition to eliminate Skid Row." It's true that the more national service "targets" poor recruits—i.e., the more it resembles the Job Corps and not the Army—the less likely it is to be seen as a duty for all the classes. Buckley is right, it seems to me, when he says tackling chronic joblessness should be left to a separate program (though he doesn't ask whether this separate program might not be a more pressing use for the $16 billion he says his service plan would cost).

A more revealing (though ultimately phony) conflict is #1 vs. #4—the debate over whether national service is more important to the servers or the served. Charles Moskos, a national service booster on whose more detailed book Buckley relies, calls for "placing the emphasis on the service performed rather than the server." Moskos's point is that when institutions focus on accomplishing a valued goal, they often build character as a side effect. The Army's purpose is military, yet it seems to provide a helpful discipline for many. But when service programs exist specifically to educate rather than to serve, they easily degenerate into makework.

The rub is that Moskos and others (myself included) clearly want national service, not for the service, but for the side effects—for its ability to "promote a spirit of civic mindedness" and "reshap[e] American life in fundamental ways." If dire "unmet needs" weren't in evidence, we might well go out and discover some, so that everyone would have to sacrifice to fulfill them. This gnawing sense of artificiality is a major reason, I think, for unease with the national service idea.

Moskos says that he only supports national service when it could "provide services more effectively or more cheaply than private enterprise or employees of public agencies." But it's not clear that national service will ever pass this test. If old people need nurses, if handicapped people need transit, why not just use tax money to pay for nurses, or to give the handicapped vouchers they can use to pay van drivers? Youthful national service workers might seem to be a cheap source of labor, but, as Richard Danzig and Peter Szanton point out in *National Service: What Would It Mean?*, this efficiency advantage tends to evaporate when you consider the costs of training a steady stream of short-term servers, and when you consider "opportunity costs"—the more productive things servers could be doing with their time if they weren't serving.

Buckley seems more candid when he says his "fascination with the idea of national service derives more from my anxiety that the giver receive satisfaction than that the object of his concern receive it. . . . The redemption of Scrooge was more important, in *A Christmas Carol*, than the stuffed goose." But Buckley's depreciation of the "service" part of national service is also highly convenient. It wouldn't do, after all, to have America's leading conservative intellectual running around discovering myriad "needs," left unmet by the market, that must be met by a corps of government workers.

In a thoroughly muddled discussion, Buckley wrestles with the (for him) troubling question of these needs. At first he implies that national service can fulfill demands that are not "felt" by the market because the people who would make those demands are too poor, for example, to buy sufficient medicine. Perhaps he senses that this argument points in a direction he doesn't approve. (If poor people don't have enough money to buy medicine, why not give them more money, or national health insurance?)

Then Buckley shifts his focus to communitarian goods that are inherently difficult for the market (even with income redistribution) to deliver because they require the negation of the market. "Loneliness is a condition not readily addressed by the market mechanism." Right. But of course the identification of collective, spiritual goods—Buckley even speaks of "solidarity"—might also get out of hand. It's safer, in the end, for Buckley to slight the service and focus on the server's gratitude. That way he can stop, on the slippery slope to liberalism, when all servers have served, even if some "needs" remain unmet.

But that won't do either. Buckley denies that he advocates a sort of patriotic Zen-Keynesianism, in which national service workers might prove their gratitude by digging pits and then filling them up again. But he does talk about the benefits of mending old books that nobody will read. He lists, as a possible national service activity, having young people conduct "anti-litter campaigns" and "raise money for charities through walk-a-thons." This is pretty close to makework. Where's the uplift in rendering services nobody cares much about?

The obvious way to avoid the sense of artificiality that surrounds national service (and to resolve the server-served debate) is to ask ourselves which concrete, non-spiritual needs are so pressing that Moskos and Buckley would be lobbying for the government to satisfy them even without a national service—even if America's young were already unselfish, rooted, patriotic souls who mixed daily with compatriots from other classes. Taking care of the infirm elderly, I think, would clearly qualify. Buckley notes that between 125,000 and 300,000 old people now living in nursing homes could move back into the "normal community" if there were enough workers to assist them with their daily chores. Maybe America also desperately needs police aides and teacher aides. But not walk-a-thons, not mending books, not "fund-raising" for art museums, "removing graffiti from public buses" or "installing smoke detectors in homes for senior citizens" (the last two being national service tasks endorsed by the Democratic Leadership Council).

Still, once these "real" needs have been identified, we should feel free to meet them through a national service even if it isn't the most efficient means of doing so. Indeed, national service will almost certainly be *less* efficient than taxes, transfers, and hired help. Unlike those mechanisms, however, it offers an opportunity to carve out a part of life where the market is negated, and where the communal non-market values Buckley invokes—fellowship, solidarity, and social equality—can flourish.

It's odd, given a national service's need for needs, that Buckley slights military service. Here, after all, is something—defending the nation—everyone agrees needs doing. Buckley reminisces fondly about the effect of military service in World War II (not to mention military service in Switzerland) in cementing bonds of "affinity" and feelings of civic fulfillment. But not only doesn't Buckley want to bring back the military draft, he doesn't even want military service to count as the equivalent of civilian service. Risk your neck in Arabia and you still have to pick up litter for a year to requite your debt to the nation. On page 29 Buckley promises to give reasons "later" why "military service ought not be confused with national service," but I'll be damned if I can find them.

Nor does Buckley ever really explain why his national service plan zeroes in on the young. What about older Americans, who may be naturally more inclined to feel the debt of gratitude he's talking about? Senator Bob Kerrey characterizes

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pro-service advocates as adults who are saying, "We don't care enough about our country, and our solution is instead of requiring adults to serve more, we're going to require our kids to serve more." It's especially suspicious when people who avoided service in Vietnam (like me) want to impose service obligations now that we're conveniently too old to be subject to them. True, if Americans of all ages were now suddenly to serve, nobody would know what to do with them all, and the cost in lost work to the economy would be staggering. But even if we impose service requirements only on "Americans born in 1973 or later," as Buckley suggests, why insist that they perform their service at any particular age? Extending the obligation into adulthood would mean modifying the idea of national service as some great instillery of values in the young (goal #1). But it would also mobilize more experienced labor (enhancing goal #4). Danzig and Szanton have an idea that might do the trick: impose a 5 percent annual income tax surcharge on everyone over 18 until they served.

That brings up the most obvious source of unease with national service, the issue of coercion. Here the goals of national service may be inalterably at odds. Buckley rejects conscription. ("The state should not be given the authority to exact from unwilling citizens work they are not disposed to do.") He favors, instead, what he calls "sanctions/inducements." The problem is how to design these so they will attract the rich into service (achieving the goal of class-mixing), without the sanctions being so draconian that they are essentially coercive or the inducements so lucrative that service becomes not a sacrifice or a gesture of requital, but a well-paid job (undermining goals #1 and #2). It's not clear this can be done. A 5 percent tax surcharge, for example, might not be enough to persuade high-earners to sacrifice a year's income.

The most popular inducement, among service advocates, is federal college aid. A bill sponsored by Senator Sam Nunn, designed by Moskos, would have given national servers a $10,000 voucher, good for a scholarship or a first home purchase, in addition to $100 a week and health benefits. That's probably not enough to lure kids rich enough to finance their own college education. (Moskos more or less admits this.) Yet it's a pretty attractive package for the poor. So much for class-mixing.

Buckley would, as best I can figure out, not only condition all federal college aid on service, but he'd also give a credit good for the first $10,000 of federal income taxes. That, plus $6,500 in pay and health insurance. This plan would be even more lucrative than Nunn's. But, as Buckley notes, it still wouldn't rope in the rich. For them Buckley holds out the cute coercion of the loss of a driver's license (why not deny them electricity, while we're at it?) and the prospect of unspecified "auxiliary sanctions" to be applied by individual states. Buckley says he's no statist; he's just a statesist. Here, however, his vestigial commitment to federalism serves mainly to let him duck the central question his book is supposed to answer.

This, too, is odd, because Buckley has a better prescription handy. If the aim is to recruit the rich into service, and to reward servers with status and honor ("first class citizenship," Buckley says), then the key levers will be the institutions that confer status and honor on the rich. In an earlier book, *Four Reforms*, Buckley proposed that "the ten top-rated private colleges and universities" require a year's worth of service as a condition for acceptance. That would again target the young, but what it loses in age-mixing it gains in class-mixing. It would certainly get the attention of the affluent—without the government having to heap on lucrative bonuses or draconian sanctions. Buckley even reprints, in *Gratitude*, the pages of *Four Reforms* containing this proposal. But then he declares that it has been "overruled by experience." Apparently the failure of Harvard and other schools to adopt his suggestion has discouraged him. Why does Buckley give up so easily? You can't help but feel that he orphaned his promising idea simply because it wasn't new anymore, which is hardly a conservative instinct.

Something like Buckley's earlier plan—a voluntary system enforced largely by status and shame—probably offers the best answer to the nagging doubts about national service. In an important way, Buckley does lend plausibility to the idea that the rich might actually volunteer to serve. That's simply because he is who he is—not only rich, but a taste-model for the rich—and he seems ready to pitch in. The point, as he puts it, is to "anticipate a day when, notwithstanding that national service continued to be voluntary, the sense of duty to volunteer would be felt by the typical citizen as keenly as, say, most young men felt a call to duty on December 7, 1941." For all its failings, *Gratitude* makes that day seem a bit less distant. ●

Periscope Gaze

BY CYNTHIA ZARIN

Near Changes by Mona Van Duyn

(Knopf, 80 pp., $18.95)

A third of the way through Mona Van Duyn's new book, *Near Changes*, her first since 1982, is a poem the very title of which, "To a Friend Who Threw Away Hair Dyes," is vintage Van Duyn, both colloquial and formal:

> Surely history's seen a happy ruler!
> Tell me the long wait that breaks the pride
> and will, yet may end in mastery, is not vain,
> that Time may love and take for royal bride
> his humblest servant, and in exchange I'll tell you
> that the heart's multitudes lower their eyes and bow down
> at their first sight on the balcony of a beautiful,
> brilliant head wearing its first cold crown.

The long wait spoken of here is now over for Van Duyn. In *Near Changes*, a title that brings to mind *Merciful Disguises*, the title of her collected poems published in 1972, certain self-restraints have been loosed, and there is no doubt about the security of her own crown. Changes—and Van Duyn's are Ovidian—go a step further toward the truth than even the most artful disguises.

Since 1953, with the publication of *Valentines to the Wide World*, Van Duyn has been hard at work writing poetry notable for its formal accomplishment and for its thematic ambition. The searching intelligence of the persona we have learned to know in her poems—the well-educated wife, good friend, and daughter—combined with the humor, technical ease, and the blend of the abstract and the quotidian that the poet has made her own have resulted in that rare good thing: a strong, clear voice, original without eccentricity.

From the start Van Duyn has been a topical poet. A list of her subjects could

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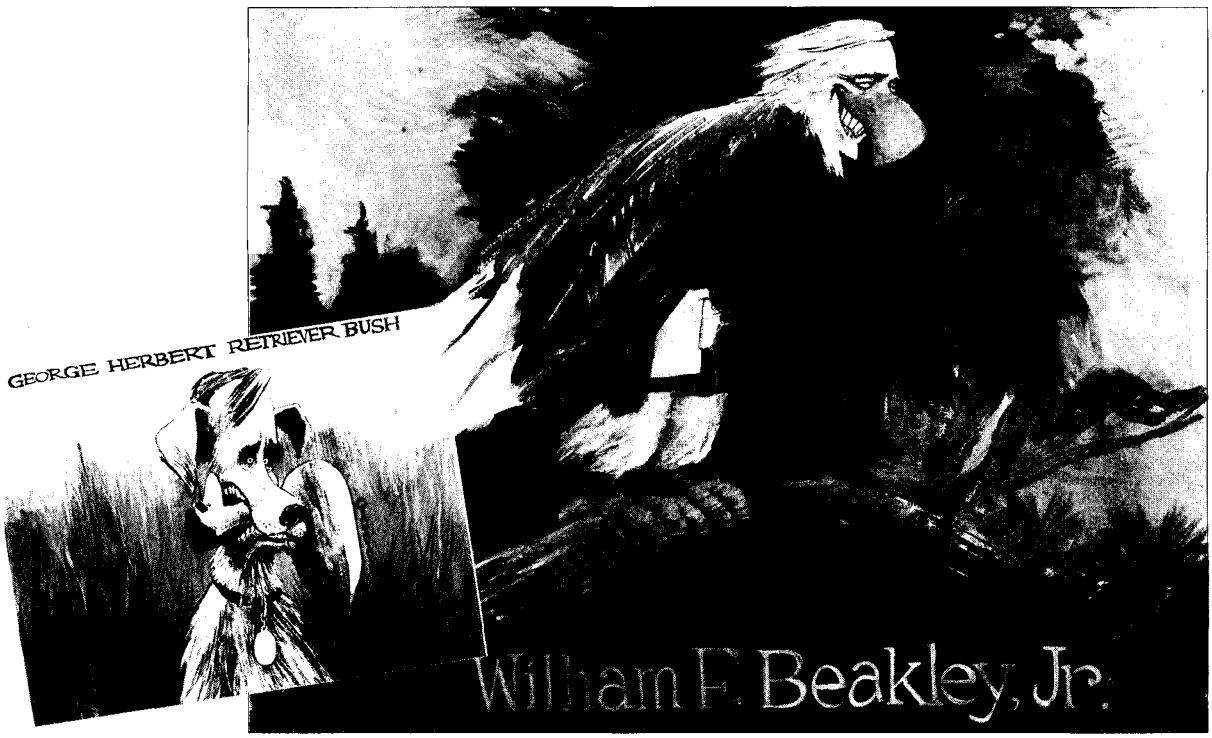

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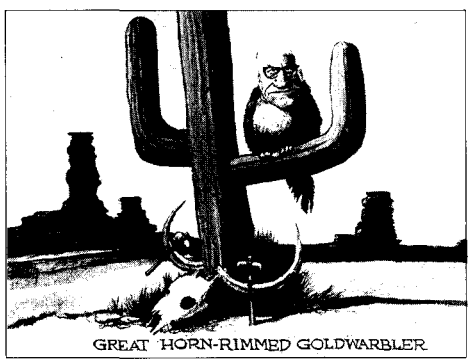

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serve as a guide to the preoccupations of the decades her work has spanned: paratroopers, suburbia (for which Van Duyn serves as a backyard Boswell), assassinations, lakeside vacations, marriage (as a state of being), motorcycles, and psychiatrists are only a few. In the tradition of her fellow Midwesterners, Thornton Wilder and Edgar Lee Masters, Van Duyn (who was born in Waterloo, Iowa, and has lived in St. Louis since 1950) has been a master of ventriloquism. *Bed Time Stories,* published in 1976, consists of fourteen poems in the voice of her grandmother, who came West at the turn of the century; and among the many poems about her parents in her last book, *Letters From A Father,* the title poem movingly re-created her father's report on the gift of a bird feeder:

> It's sure a surprise how well Mother is doing
> she forgets her laxative but bowels move fine.
> Now that our windows are open she says our birds
> sing all day. The girl took a Book of Knowledge on loan
> from the library and I am reading up
> on the habits of birds, did you know some males have three
> wives, some migrate, some don't. I am going to keep
> feeding all spring, maybe summer, you see they expect it.

The pathos here, and the joke, on the "Book of Knowledge," combined with the father's identification with polygamous birds, is typical of Van Duyn's great narrative ease.

Chief among her subjects have been the roles of daughter and granddaughter: the feeder the speaker is reporting on is a gift from the writer, who has earlier in this long poem been excoriated for her extravagance, as her parents "won't be living more than a few weeks longer." Van Duyn's mother and father both died in 1980, and the first poem in *Near Changes,* called "Birthstones," set off as a prologue to the main text, was written in 1966. Interestingly, it was left unpublished until now, perhaps because its closing mood of freedom set it apart from the earlier poems Van Duyn wrote about her parents—especially her mother—in which that relationship seemed a stultifying rather than instructive bond. The poem begins:

> When I was young and we were poor
> my mother showed me a ring some old love gave her,
> and said, "I'll have your birthstone set in it."
>
> And said, "Don't ever lose it. The jeweler
> offered to sell me half-glass, half-emerald,
> but I'm giving you the real jewel."
> I wore it as if she had given me the world.
> I had no notion what things cost.
> I thought she'd love me if I could be good at last,
>
> but I never was . . .

The stone proves, of course, to be all glass, and Van Duyn's synthetic, seemingly casual rhyme scheme sets up the framework for what turns out to be the usefulness of her mother's betrayal. "Poor" is rhymed with "her," and then in the second stanza with "jeweler"; a rhyme that is carried over, turned into interior assonance, in "emerald," which is itself, in the third stanza, rhymed with "world," so that phonetically, "poor" has translated with Nabokovian ease into "world" in eight lines. Poor world, in which lies are told for love! One hears, too, the tsk-tsk of the t-rhymes: it, cost, and last. All this in three stanzas.

Done—for the time being—with her mother, the speaker recounts a lonely adolescence and a triumph over it:

> I looked in books to find out how to feel.
> Then, holding them cheap, I tried an exchange of rings.
> My new one tested real.
>
> And on I went, and learned to recognize
> the faintest glimmer of pure green
> in a hand's clasp, or a pair of eyes,
>
> and out came carats of green from a guarded mine . . .

Grown-up and "decked with rings," "still more green / exchanges" come to the speaker, and the poem ends with two beautiful, knowledgeable lines:

> Dazzled I walk the world my mother gave me,
> whose stony streets are paved with emerald.

This transforming sequence—promise, betrayal, withdrawal, gratitude, and celebration—might be seen to mark the stages in Van Duyn's own poetic career up until now. In her new book, there are poems that seem to partner her early work, as if a second skater—one who not only made the intricate figures but saw in those figures a pattern—had joined the younger one on the ice. The poems I am thinking of have mainly to do with Van Duyn's view of a particular child, who may or may not be herself. Here are the opening lines of the first poem, "Three Valentines to the Wide World," in Van Duyn's debut volume:

> The Child disturbs our view. Tow head bent, she
> stands on one leg and folds up the other. She is listening
> to the sound of her fingernail on a scab on her knee.
> If I were her mother I would think right now of the chastening
> that ridiculous arrangement of bones and bumps must go through,
> and that big ear too, till they learn what to do and hear . . .

In the central section of the poem, this disorganized child asks her mother whether love "is God's hobby." The poem continues:

> . . . At eight you don't even
> look up from your scab when you ask it. A kid's squeak,
> is that a fit instrument for such a question?

Discovering "a fit instrument" for that question has been one of the forces at play in Van Duyn's strict husbanding of her verse, and the child whom the speaker describes can be read, I think, not only as lost time but as a correlative to her perception of the generation and possibilities of poetry. The section concludes:

> I remember now. Legs shoved you up, you couldn't tell
> where the next tooth would fall out or grow in, or what
> your own nose would look like next year. Anything was possible.
> Then it slowed down, and you had to keep what you got.
> When this child's body stretches to the grace of her notion,
> and she's tamed and curled, may she be free enough to bring
> mind and heart to that serious recreation
> where anything is still possible—or almost anything.

Even in this early work, Van Duyn manages to elevate a flat colloquial phrase: "you had to keep what you got" is charged by rhyming with "what," in the second quoted line, and the catching breeze of poetry in the lovely "grace of her notion" moves the wooden boat of the poem along.

But then here is the child again, decades later, in the middle of the poem, "First Trip Through the Automatic Car Wash," in *Near Changes*:

> . . . dark leaves wrap her in a wild
> and waving threat, a typhoon that is all hers,
> swabbing to get in, as the storms of a child
> threaten the very skin of the child, its frail
> shell of self-regard.

This stage of the car wash, a "snail-spin, in neutral," seems "To destroy the customary in order to let in / something unwitnessed yet." The poem continues:

> Something refuses to be withstood.
> Its untamed, zigzag, dark rubbing will break through.
> You *will* change, it squeaks, I replace old selfhood.

The word "selfhood" clunks here—Van Duyn sometimes slips into an overliteralness, a colloquialism that mirrors the banality, rather than the poetry, encased in contemporary language—but the rest is marvelous, and the squeaky voice echoes that first child's squeak, in "Three Valentines to the Wide World," as she asks her innocent, piercing question about God. But the truth of that child is that even she is not inviolate:

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witness the scab. She has already been intruded upon and hurt. Change is after all a kind of death. But a kind of insistence on change from within, as when the body out of its own self makes new skin over a wound, transforming the flesh, runs through this book.

A slight millennial streak runs through it too—a new sense of the unknown beyond the bend, terrible but beautiful. The eon at its close is for Van Duyn a personal one: the end of her role as a daughter and, with that, an urgent sense of her own mortality. This streak can be traced back, I think, to a wonderful, enduring poem called "The Stream," from Van Duyn's transitional book, *Letters From A Father.* It is about the death of the poet's mother, the difficult, overweaning figure who proffered glass emeralds. In the poem, something subterranean—a foreshadowing of the thing trying to break loose, and the fear of it, that surface in *Near Changes*—takes place in Van Duyn's work, and a less sure, questioning voice appears. At the start of the section quoted below, the speaker has returned from what turns out to be her last visit to her mother, now in a nursing home, who has said, "You'll never know how much I love you." The speaker leaves, in tears, and the poem continues:

> I forgot to tell them that you always sneaked
> your meat,
> you'd bragged, to the man who ate beside
> you. One night
>
> at home, my heart ringing with what you'd
> said,
> then morning, when the phone rang to say
> you were dead.
>
> I see your loving look wherever I go.
> What is love? Truly I do not know.
>
> Sometimes, perhaps, instead of a great sea,
> it is a narrow stream running urgently
>
> far below ground, held down by rocky
> layers,
> the deed of mother and father, helpless
> sooth-sayers
>
> of how our life is to be, weighted by clay,
> the dense pressure of thwarted need, the
> replay
>
> of old misreadings . . .

Here the yoked couplets carry the speaker forward. Trying to find the answer to the question, "what is love?" (she's now moved beyond wondering whether it is "God's hobby"), she becomes a dowser, in search of the wellspring, which by the end she has discovered:

> Here at my feet I see, after sixty years,
> the welling water—to which I add these
> tears.

That well of water, found only after the death of the poet's mother, is the source for the poems in *Near Changes*, which demonstrate a new, even higher level of accomplishment. One thinks of that first young girl, probing the mystery of new flesh and learning about the miracle of regeneration. One is never oneself as one was before, and if there has been a problem with Van Duyn's work up until now, it was, to this reader, an absence of lyric discovery. Van Duyn has no equal in her ability to see the world objectively (her third book, which won the National Book Award in 1971, was called *To See, To Take*), and she unfailingly places what she sees in her own, wide-ranging context: she has a periscope gaze, with a fish-eye lens.

Still, there were poems in which it seemed that Van Duyn thought perhaps *too* hard before she spoke. The labor was a little too apparent, and in some cases the poems simply went on too long, as though Van Duyn didn't trust the sense of her impulses to come across to the reader without a gloss. That Van Duyn has been aware of this I am sure. One of the themes she has engagingly come back to on several occasions is her fear of airplane travel: this is a writer who doesn't trust a vehicle to stay up in the air without her hand on the controls.

But at least two new and exciting strains have now appeared in Van Duyn's work. The first, briefly, is that her poems now seem to be propelled by inner necessity rather than by a premeditated structure, by the imagination rather than by its aftermath, logical reduction. One sign of this new strength is a striking, associative use of language, especially noticeable in the remarkable sestina "Memoir," with its superb fifth stanza:

> The heart must be mud-mum or lose
> face when the god without words,
> with child-cheeks, with Orphic ear,
> lies down there, shuttered of eye,
> and leaves his indelible imprint.
> Love's incoherence is sound.

Second, without any lessening of her objective eye, Van Duyn seems in her new book to apprehend the physical world around her with an even higher level of lyric economy. It is as if having thrown off the many-layered disguises—specifically the role of the dutiful daughter, which inevitably entails a certain amount of hemming and hawing and for this writer seemed at times to mask her true identity—Van Duyn is now able to present some of the best images of her career. When working at the top of their powers, all poets are orphans. It is impossible to quote at length from all of these poems, but a handful of these images, for me, would include the description of a ferris wheel as "a great segmented seed pod," her grandmother's swollen knuckles transformed into zinnias, that "high-prole flower," and the whole of the beautiful "On Receiving A Postcard From Japan." That poem is a short, delicate tale of the fantastic, arranged as a dream sequence by the end of which the distant lover has "grown gills from the long, passionate journey":

> Smiling, you sit at ease on the god's game-
> ground,
> and in tender aqueous light of early
> morning
> eat a late breakfast of sea-weed where I
> drowned.

"Delete, delete, delete," says Van Duyn to the mockingbird, whose song is "two-thirds his own . . . and one-third mimicry," a "bird-brained, brilliant stylist," in "Mockingbird Month," an animal poem *not* about humans changing into animals, because here the mockingbird is a stand-in for the poet's most caustic self-examination. That editorial "delete" puts one in mind of Elizabeth Bishop's now famous elegy for Robert Lowell, with its wrenching lines: "repeat, repeat, re-

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peat; revise, revise, revise." Bishop ends, "Sad friend, you cannot change." The best poets are always making and remaking their work. In *Near Changes*, Van Duyn courageously demonstrates that a sense of possibility is necessary, that there is beauty in bare places, and it is engendered and sustained by mindfulness and care.

CYNTHIA ZARIN is the author of *The Swordfish Tooth* (Knopf), a book of poems.

After the Fall

BY HANS AARSLEFF

Novalis: A Romantic's Theory of Language and Poetry by Kristin Pfefferkorn,

(Yale University Press, 308 pp., $30)

Novalis will remind everyone of his or her favorite Romantic poet: of Wordsworth, for his concern with the language of poetry and trust in the intuitions of the child; of Coleridge, for his philosophy and his massive notebooks; of Keats, for his sensuous intensity; of Blake, for his fondness for the German mystic Jacob Boehme. Carlyle devoted one of his early essays to the German poet, and Emerson spoke of "the ardent and sainted Novalis." All of them were eager to find a remedy for the estrangement that they felt had split subject from object, man from nature, thinking from feeling. Their remedy was poetry. They believed that poetry would restore mankind to what Novalis called transcendental health, to such wholeness of being and harmony with the world that the autonomy of the subject and its capacity for insight and self-understanding would again be fully realized. In the end, all the world would become poetry, and every one of us poets.

Romantic art, owing to this insistence on the primacy of the self, often shows an isolated figure musing alone in the midst of nature. Feeding on nature, as it were, the mind builds its own ideal world within the self, and the medium of this private activity is language. Without language, there could be no musing, no poetry at all. "We know something only in so far as we can express it, i.e., make it," said Novalis, reiterating a Romantic commonplace. The poet's first question, therefore, is: How can language meet the high aims of poetry? This is the central problem of Romantic aesthetics, which are known in English from Wordsworth's prefaces to *Lyrical Ballads.* Novalis's theories of poetics and language are chiefly found in his remarkable notebooks, which range widely over the philosophical issues of his time.

Though Novalis died of consumption at 28 in 1801, he managed to have two productive careers during his short life. In public life, in which he was known as Friedrich von Hardenberg, he rose to high office in the Saxon mining industry. He was ambitious, worked hard, studied science and technology under some of the best specialists of the day, and gave immense care to official reports that are still admired for both style and thoroughness. No Romantic equaled his command of science and mathematics. He said himself that he considered his literary pursuits strictly secondary to his professional, public work. As a poet he called himself Novalis: he found the name in the early records of his noble family, but it probably meant most to him because it is the Latin word for a meadow ready for cultivation, for new fruit.

As a poet-philosopher, Novalis was extravagantly speculative and visionary, to a degree that makes him a sort of super-romantic. He is best known for the short cycle of poems called "Hymns to the Night." Celebrated as an emblematic expression of the Romantic spirit, this cycle was one of the few writings that were published during his lifetime. Most of what he wrote for publication—including the two mysterious prose romances *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* ("The Apprentices of Sais"), which were both intended to form part of larger works that were never written, appeared the year after his death, in two volumes that were edited by his friends Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel.

These volumes also contained a selection of the vast mass of notes in which Novalis recorded his efforts to shape a poetic philosophy of existence. These notes exhibit the typical Romantic blend of aesthetics and epistemology that results when language is made the key to all understanding. The published notes have steadily grown in bulk as more and more have been put into print in successive editions; in the recently completed edition in five hefty volumes, they form much the greater part of Novalis's oeuvre. (From 1960 on, this edition has substantially revised our previous view of the chronology and the ordering of the notes, thus advancing our knowledge of Novalis's thought and its development.)

Novalis's thought took shape to solve a conflict between philosophy and religion. He grew up in a particularly intimate form of religion, which held that the certainty of God's creation of man must be matched by the certainty of his creation of nature as our home and as a limitless source of reverential admiration. Blue skies, flowers, little animals, being God's work, are just as real as we are. With its stress on the subjectivity of experience, however, German idealism of the late eighteenth century had raised doubts about the raw existence of that other world, even to the point of suggesting that it might be a projection of our minds—which might seem like a claim that things are because we think them.

Novalis knew Fichte, studied his writings, absorbed his philosophy; but he could not accept the implication that the world of nature had only a secondary existence. He found a solution to the conflict in the mystical tradition that had informed his own pietism, especially in the German mystic Jacob Boehme (1574-1624), to whose writings he turned after Fichte. What he found in the mystical tradition were four related conceptions, which became familiar ideas in Romantic thought. The first was the so-called doctrine of correspondence, according to which the two worlds of man and nature, the microcosm and the macrocosm, are joined in perfect harmony since both are God's creation. The world, therefore, is not an alien place, and we can, if we choose, be at home in it.

The second notion held that man had once lived in perfect harmony with nature because he possessed a language that gave direct and sympathetic knowledge of the creatures, much like the language that Adam was said to have used when he named the animals in Eden. The third taught that this harmony had been shattered when man made himself master of creation; the result was a spiritual and epistemological fall, as man lost the knowledge and the language that had secured the harmony. And the fourth conception saw the remedy for this estrangement in the recovery of the Adamic language.

Access to the Adamic language could

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only be mystical; but Novalis did not follow that path. Unlike the mystics, he did not seek a return to a golden age of the past. Instead, he envisioned a future golden age to be attained by the poeticization of the world. But he agreed with the mystics both on the cause of our loss and on the idea that the recovery of knowledge required a language powerful and rich enough to express that knowledge. Language was the seam between the two estranged halves; the Romantic theory of language gave hope that they could again be joined.

Novalis held that language was the primal act of all human creativity, and the progenitor of the self-awareness that is the condition for our knowledge of self and of the world. The notion pivots on the principle that thinking and speaking, thought and language are inseparable. Wilhelm von Humboldt had built his philosophy of language on this principle, and in the same spirit Wordsworth insisted that our expressions must be "a constituent part and power or function of the thought," and not the mere outward clothing of it. Thus linguistic creativity enlarges the fullness of our insight and understanding; its essential nature is the spontaneous expression of the psyche, of our feelings, thoughts, and imaginings. Since it is both the organ of thought and the medium of poetry, only language can bring the two severed worlds back together again.

On this matter, too, Novalis found himself at odds with Fichte. In the mid-1790s, just as Novalis was beginning his Fichte studies, Fichte published an essay in which he urged that language was not necessary to thinking. This position was consistent with his philosophy (Kant had also omitted language from his), but it was also an anachronism, for it revived the very rationalism that had created the split between subject and object that Romanticism sought to transcend.

The rationalism of Descartes had made vision and the eye the test of truth. Clarity and distinctness, geometry and mathematics were the criteria of any true understanding of the world. Questions of beauty, love, and value were relegated to the subjective realm of our shifting passions, where true knowledge was not possible. The spirit of rationalism was displayed in those vast empty spaces whose silence frightened Pascal. Rationalism had bought its much prized objectivity at the cost of making us into little creatures crawling around in an indifferent world in which our self-knowledge counted for nothing. Consistent with such an outlook, rationalism held that language was the mere outward representation of thought, with words serving the utilitarian needs of communication by supplying a nomenclature for concepts that came ready-made from the mind's wordless activity. In the rationalist view, our language was a debased form of an originally divine and rational language.

For the Romantics, by contrast, it was the essential expression of our being, because we had made it and continued to keep it at our command. Thinking and speaking being partners, it followed that the very use of language gives us the means of knowledge that the mystics had attributed to the lost language of Adam. Conversation, therefore, is the way to truth, to harmony among ourselves, to intimacy with the other half of creation.

Conversation banished alienation by creating closeness and a deep kind of interpenetration. When Novalis first met the philosopher Schelling, he wrote to a friend that they had spent some precious hours "symphilosophizing" together. Some months later he wrote that, though he badly lacked books, he missed even more having people around with whom he could, as he said, "electrify myself. I am chiefly creative in conversation." In the last months of his life, he found it a great hardship that he was not allowed to talk much, for speaking "has for me been almost indispensable to thinking."

The creative quality of conversation made company essential in the lives of the young Romantics. The programs that were proclaimed in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and in the Schlegel brothers' journal *Athenaeum* (1798-1800) emerged from small groups of intense young people of both sexes who craved constant discussion among themselves to nourish and formulate their thinking. This may seem paradoxical, since we do not ordinarily associate Romanticism with gregariousness. For the Romantics, however, the gregariousness of language, if we can call it that, was at the center of their enterprise.

The great question was how we enter into conversation with nature so that we can enjoy the harmony promised by the correspondence doctrine; for once we have that enjoyment, we also have the self-knowledge that is the final aim of poetry. Novalis gave a part of the answer in his major work, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which was to be, he said, the "apotheosis of poetry." It is about the formation of a young man, who, though born a poet, must struggle with the world to gain his voice. Through his many encounters and experiences he learns much, but his vision is still limited: "He saw the world lie before him in its large and varied forms. But she was still mute and her soul, conversation, had not yet been awakened."

Then a great change comes over our hero, who meets a great poet whose very language inspires Heinrich to enter the realm of true poetry by giving voice to nature. From now on Heinrich makes rapid progress, soon remarking that "language is truly a little world in signs and sounds," in which we wish also to encompass the great world in order to have the joy of expression that is both the primal urge of our being and the essence of poetry. To this the great poet remarks that it is too bad we have such limiting terms as poetry and poet, for poetry "is not at all something special. It is the human spirit's characteristic mode of activity; doesn't everyone make poetry and aspire to it every minute?" Poetry is the quintessence of humanity.

The poet gives voice to nature by naming. He can perform this task because "the true poet is all-knowing; he is a real world in miniature." As a microcosm, he has in himself the seed of everything in the world, if only he will open himself to it and speak the lan-

Whistler: The White Girl

Not yet the bearskin
rug with its head,
or the brown glass
of her eyes there,
posed clover, dropped,
marigolds abused
as plums. Not
yet the rough
stitch of carpetflowers,
a garden startled
through bathroom glass.
For first there is
the white girl, even
before the fallen
hair or failed
shoulder, the white
dominion she holds
in an old place:
her lily, the hand,
her finely sutured
sleeves in a den
between linen walls
where women study curtains
to learn the graces
of crossing such
rooms without betrayal.

Bruce Bond

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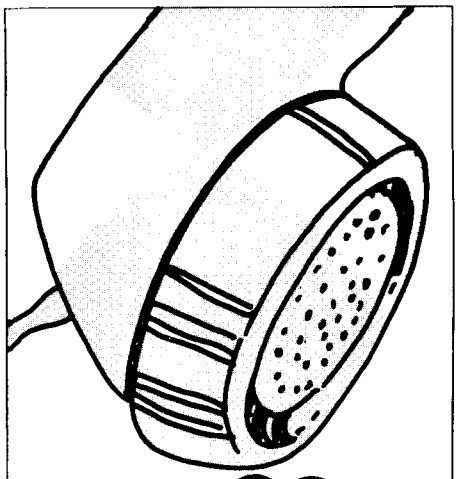

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guage that joins us with nature. Novalis conceived this naming on the analogy of the mathematician's play with signs and formulae. This conception may seem extravagant, but it is in fact implied in the correspondence doctrine. About this naming "poetic philosopher" Novalis said that he "is *en état de Createur absolu.* A circle, a triangle are created in that fashion. They have no quality except what the maker put into them." Elsewhere he observed that, like mathematics, language "is a world of its own, it plays only with itself, expresses nothing but its own wonderful nature and is for that reason expressive because it mirrors the curious play of relations among things." But since this language is the product of conversation, it is not like the merely imposed signs of the rationalist. Novalis's idea of the ultimate mission of poetry was expressed in his saying that "when our mind and our world harmonize, then we are like God." In the form of poetry, language promised the future attainment of a golden age that would last forever. Novalis was unequaled, surely, in the grandeur of his idea of poetry as redemption.

Kristin Pfefferkorn has chosen an important and difficult subject. It requires, for a start, a thorough understanding of the theories of language that were current around 1800. Unfortunately she is disastrously unfamiliar with the relevant literature, primary and secondary, and fills the vacuum with guesswork and misinterpretation. About Novalis's interest in hieroglyphics, for example, she suggests that it may have been triggered by "Napoleon's return from his campaign of 1798-99 with ancient Egyptian artifacts that inspired wonder and admiration." But Napoleon did not return with artifacts; they, and the excitement, came much later, long after Novalis's death. It is distressing to find, in a study of a major figure in German literature, no awareness that Diderot, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Baader, and others treated hieroglyphics as a significant topic in the theory of language and aesthetics.

Especially serious, however, is Pfefferkorn's ignorance that Novalis's relation to Fichte has been cast in an entirely new light by the very edition of his notes that she uses. In previous editions of Novalis, the notes on Fichte had been mixed with notes from other sources, but in the current edition Hans-Joachim Mähl has, with immense editorial care, separated the Fichte notes from the rest and placed them in the order in which they seem to have been written. Pfefferkorn has completely missed the facts and the implications of Mähl's and the other editors' work. Her book originated as a doctoral dissertation, and it should have been left in the darkness of the microfilm archives.

HANS AARSLEFF teaches at Princeton University and is the author of *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (University of Minnesota Press).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

Sloopy reporting

To the editors:

In Michael Lewis's exposé of the Charles Givens Organization ("Every Man a Milken," October 29), my curiosity was piqued by the statement that he was the author of the hit song "Hang on Sloopy." Good public librarians always verify their sources, and I did before treating my friends to a new piece of trivia. I found that Bert Russell and Wes Farrell wrote the words and music (see *Popular Music*, vol. 3, edited by Nat Shapiro, and *The Great Song Thesaurus*, by Roger Lax and Frederick Smith). Did Mr. Lewis fall victim to an information without risk scheme?

DEAN CORNER
Binghamton, New York

Michael Lewis replies:

In my defense I can say only that I follow in the footsteps of half a dozen other Givens biographers in misattributing the song. Givens now claims he wrote a similar song called "Peanuts for Snoopy." Probably only he knows how the mistake was first made.

Poetry corner

To the editors:

New Republic, O arrogant one,
Why do I continue to subscribe?
The money I send could be much better spent
On substances to imbibe.
But just at the point where I decide I must cancel,
My revulsion goes up in a poofus,
'Cause I could never give up on a rag with such class,
Whose cover says, "Helmut Kohl, doofus."

RANDY OLSON
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

The editors reply:

What a nice compliment. Thanks. The only trouble is, what the cover (of the December 10 issue) actually said was "Helmet Kohl, doofus." We could probably get away with arguing that this was a clever if slightly obscure headgear joke, but we cannot tell a lie. We too are a doofus. ●

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Being boring

AS IF TO PROVE THE THOMIST nostrum that almost anything human can be turned to both good and evil, the Catholic Church has installed a 900 number. No, Cardinal O'Connor is not on call to tell you whether you're a pervert or not. The new service, 1-900-PREVIEW, is a modern version of the medieval Index: you call up to find out whether movies and videos on general release are morally correct or not. There are five categories: from A-I (general patronage) to A-IV (for adults, but "with reservations") right up to—yes, the big O—"morally offensive." The recorded messages, unfortunately, don't live up to the thrill of other, more successful, 900 lines. Well, not quite. As a faithful Catholic, I called up the service last weekend to guide my Saturday night viewing. The messages have a kind of Monty Python tone: mostly deadpan, but occasionally lapsing into—well, judge for yourself. *Dangerous Liaisons*, though "devoid of moral and religious fiber," also "weaves a web of sexual intrigue and treachery" before becoming a "psycho-sexual tug of war mesmerized by explicit dialogue." Mesmerized? Calm down, father. *Dances with Wolves* contains "sensitive treatment of Native Americans" but is marred by its "minimal restrained love-making, and a flash of rear nudity." A *flash*? My favorite is the O-rated *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, the review of which I reproduce (almost) in full: "An engaged couple stranded on a back road late at night wander into an eerie mansion where they join in the kinky games of a Transylvanian transvestite and his weird band of followers. This clumsy adaptation of a campy British musical spoofs old horror movies while trashing traditional values in a tiresome display of bad taste and moral vacuity." And if that doesn't get you rushing out to rent it, nothing will.

STILL, NO ONE CAN SAY THAT Holy Mother Church is low-tech anymore. The burning question is: Why stop at movie reviews? The 900 concept could solve a whole clutch of pastoral headaches. Forget the clergy shortage and financial crunch. Why not set up 1-900-PECCAVI, a new improved confession service? Reach out and absolve someone. You can almost hear the dulcet clerical tones now: "Welcome to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, sponsored by the Holy Spirit and your local Catholic Church. When asked questions, please respond using the numbers on your touch-tone telephone. You may enter your numbers at any time, without waiting for the Holy Spirit to answer. Touch One for a venial sin. Touch Two for a mortal sin. Thank you. Touch One for pride. Touch two for jealousy. Touch three for envy. Touch four for lust. No, don't touch that. Thank you. When you're finished, touch the pound sign for absolution." Penance, I guess, is getting the phone bill.

INDICATIONS THAT THE 1990S ARE set to be the most boring decade of the century have just received one more piece of mind-numbing confirmation. No, I don't mean the Yugoslav elections, the "New Paradigm," or the maiden opinion of Mr. Justice Souter. The emergence of John Major as British prime minister could all by itself provoke coffee futures to soar. What's really worrying is that he has such a fascinating past—college dropout, trapeze artist father, early ambition to be a bus driver, etc.—all of which suggests that his innate tedium quotient is truly enormous. Major's first statement upon becoming the successor to Peel, Disraeli, and Churchill was that it was "very exciting," even "worthwhile." Gee. My own theory is that there's something faintly sinister about it all, and I'm not simply referring to the fact that his wife, Norma, has an uncanny resemblance to the young Margaret Thatcher. British TV's satirical puppet show, *Spitting Image*, portrays Major as a remote-control toy, an aerial coming out of his head, zooming in various directions, controlled from afar by a manic woman in tweed, smoking a cigar (no prizes for guessing who). My view is that this is only half right. Major is, in fact, Thatcherism's archetypal product: modern, efficient, exportable, assembled from British-made components, but actually manufactured by Sony. And the pundits, poor deluded fools, think he's pro-Europe.

LIKE MANY PEOPLE, I HAD BEEN under the impression that Milli Vanilli was an exotic innovation of Ben and Jerry's. But the mass scorn directed at the pop group for never having sung a note on their records prompted me to investigate further. Their CDs, it turns out, are excellent, danceable pop. Their videos are just as good. So what was the fuss about? The truth is, almost all the condescension toward the dreadlocked, Germanic lipsynchers is disingenuous. Yes, yes, they should have credited the real singers who recorded their songs. But that's all they should be criticized for. The idea that they merit opprobrium for not actually singing or writing the songs they perform is ridiculous. The whole point—and brilliance—of the pop industry is that they don't have to do any of it. What consumers rightly demand of pop is good tunes, slick production, and endless, sexy images on video. There are very few people who can do it all—even Madonna has been known to lip-synch—so all great new pop records are team techno-efforts. The best of them spin illusions more imaginatively than the others. Milli Vanilli did all of this with great skill and panache, rendering the lives of those of us who get a kick out of this stuff marginally less tedious. Rather than taking away their Grammy for this feat, the industry should have given them an extra one, *pour encourager les autres.*

AMID THE UNCEASING FESTIVE cheer now bounding through the office (see cover), an unsolicited present appeared in my mailbox last week. Yes, it's the 1991 Conservative Calendar, a lively selection of heart-warming pinups and maxims to get you through each month of the year. January's centerfold is Pat Buchanan and January 1, one learns, is Barry Goldwater's birthday. Happy Birthday, Barry! February's focus is R. Emmett Tyrrell, editor of *The American Spectator*, who reminds us, somewhat elliptically, that "New Age Liberalism was in essence nothing more complicated or noble than a running argument with life as it was lead [sic] by normal Americans." April's normal American is an unvarnished glimpse up John Sununu's nose, the rolls of his double chin lapping at his collar, the words of eloquence tripping off his glistening tongue: "As we go into this new world, one of the things that we're going to depend on more in terms of defense is the technological component of our strategic defense." Inspired yet? After a brief detour through July's Adam Smith, Arnold Schwarzenegger is September's playmate of the month: "More than the mountains, mines, farmlands, or machines, our children are this country's greatest asset." In December we learn that December 12, 1989, was when George Bush privatized the water industry and that December 14 is the birthday of (here he comes again) R. Emmett Tyrrell. My 1990 memorial hint to the Democratic National Committee is that they immediately mass mail this document as a special Christmas gift to as many swing voters as possible. It could be their biggest chance for increased donations this side of a 900 number.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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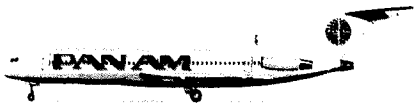

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